Scarlet Witch

The Complete Collection

by James Robinson

MARVEL

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Scarlet
Witch
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ALL RIGHT! THIS IS FOR *YOU*! AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

THOU SHALT NOT
SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE.

EXODUS 22:18

UPPER EAST SIDE. MANHATTAN.
GHA!
JUST A COUPLE MORE WRINKLES. A LITTLE MORE GREY...
...COULD BE WORSE.

PLIP
BAD DREAM?
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BAD DREAMS.
THEY'RE MESSAGES OUR SUBCONSCIOUS SENDS US, IF WE ONLY CARED TO READ THEM AS SUCH.
OH, I'M IN A PSYCHOLOGY 101 CLASS WITH PROFESSOR WANDA? I DIDN'T REALIZE, I'LL GET MY NOTEBOOK.
AND YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE DRY SARCASM FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.
IT ISN'T MORNING. IT'S STILL NIGHT.
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEANT...

...AGATHA.
ANYWAY, IT WASN'T A BAD DREAM. MORE A *MEMORY*. AND A MESSAGE, LIKE I SAID.
I'M JUST NOT CERTAIN WHAT IT'S TELLING ME YET.
I SENSE SOMETHING, AGATHA. OUT THERE IN THE CITY TONIGHT, SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT.
IT'S NEW YORK. THERE ARE ALWAYS THINGS THAT AREN'T RIGHT.
YOU MEAN MAGIC?
WELL, YES...BUT MORE SPECIFICALLY...
WITCHCRAFT.

I'M GLAD I DECIDED TO BUY THIS PLACE. BEST THING I COULD HAVE DONE.
FOR WHAT IT *COST* YOU, I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY.
I KNOW YOU'D PREFER I TAKE MYSELF AWAY-- TO A *GINGERBREAD HOUSE* IN THE WOODS, PERHAPS? A *CAVE* IN THE GROUND?
WELL, I WAS THINKING MORE A NICE HOUSE UPSTATE, BUT I DO ENJOY GINGERBREAD.
SERIOUSLY, I JUST THINK SOMEWHERE AWAY FROM THE CITY MIGHT SUIT YOU BETTER. YOU HAVEN'T ALWAYS FARED SO WELL AROUND LOTS OF PEOPLE.
AGREED, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE DETERMINED TO FARE BETTER.
BESIDES, IN THE LEGENDS AND FAIRY TALES, CABINS AND CAVES...
...ARE WHERE THE *BAD* WITCHES LIVE.

ANYWAY, I DO SO LOVE THE VIEW.
I CAN SEE NEW YORK FOR ALL THAT IT IS FROM UP HERE. GOOD AND BAD. ITS SPIRIT, ITS TIMBRE... AND OF COURSE ITS *MANY HUES*...
...WHY EVEN AS I LOOK OUT NOW AT THE NIGHT... THOSE *AURAS* TELL ME WHERE GOOD AND BAD RESIDE.
BETTER THAN A TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS, I'LL SAY THAT.
HOW'S THE COFFEE?
DELICIOUS, I WISH YOU COULD TRY IT.
YES. BEING DEAD HAS ITS DRAWBACKS.

SO IT BEGINS.
A NEW LIFE FOR ME?
I HOPE SO-- A NEW DIRECTION.
ALL I KNOW FOR SURE--SOMETHING IN THIS CITY IS *AMISS.*
AND I DON'T EVEN NEED MY "VIEW" OF THE NEW YORK SKYLINE TO TELL ME...
...NOR MAGIC WAND OR POINTY HAT OR EYE OF NEWT AND TOE OF FROG...
...BUT MERELY BY OBSERVING THE OBVIOUS...
...SAD AND STILL AND IN PLAIN VIEW.
ABOUT THE DEATH OF MANY CATS

I'VE HAD SOME PROBLEMS IN THE PAST.
MY LIFE HAS BEEN A MINEFIELD OF MISSTEPS, MISTAKES AND--I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT--EVEN SOME MENTAL INSTABILITY.
MY POWER--THE ABILITY I GOT AT BIRTH--ALLOWS ME TO BREAK THE LAWS OF PHYSICS AND SCIENTIFIC ABSOLUTES.
LEVITATION, TRANSFORMATION, TELEPORTATION AND SUCH.
I'VE OFTEN HEARD THE SPELLS I CAST REFERRED TO AS *CHAOS MAGIC*...
...BUT IN ACTUAL FACT THEY'RE FAR FROM "CHAOTIC"--THEIR POWER AND INTENSITY ARE LINKED TO THE ENERGY OF THE *EARTH* AND *WOMANKIND*--
--REVERED BY ANCIENT PAGAN FAITHS--
--FEARED BY MEN.

ITS NAME IS *WITCHCRAFT.*
IN MY PAST, I HAVE ILL-USED THAT POWER. AND I AM FEARED BECAUSE OF IT.
BUT I AM MORE THAN THE SUM OF THOSE MISTAKES. I AM BETTER THAN THAT.
AND I RESOLVE TO PUT THINGS RIGHT... TO RIGHT THE WRONGS WHEN MAGIC--WITCHCRAFT--IS INVOLVED.
AND NOT AS PART OF A TEAM.
NYPD
ME ALONE.
MAY I SPEAK TO *DETECTIVE ERIKSON?* HE'S THE LEAD INVESTIGATOR ON THE RESTAURANT MURDER LAST NIGHT, YES?
YEAH, HE'S LEAD. YOU GOTTA NAME, SWEETHEART?
YES, "BUTTERCUP," I DO. *WANDA MAXIMOFF.*
ALTHOUGH...
...YOU PROBABLY KNOW ME BETTER BY *ANOTHER* NAME.

SO HERE WE ARE AT THE CRIME SCENE, MS. MAXIMOFF, AS YOU REQUESTED. BAGGED AND DUSTED. DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL ELSE TO TELL YOU.
WE GOT THE KILLER BACK AT THE PRECINCT, HE CLAIMS TO HAVE NO RECOLLECTION OF HIS ACTIONS, WHICH IS THE FIRST STEP TO AN INSANITY PLEA, SO I DON'T BLAME HIM.
BATES BISTRO AND BAR. ORCHARD AND STANTON.
FRANKLY, OPEN AND SHUT LIKE THIS IS, I'D PREFER YOU USED YOUR HOCUS-POCUS TO MAKE HIM EXPLAIN WHY HE DID WHAT HE DID.
HE SAYS HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER HIM.
HE WAS A BUS BOY HERE?
YEAH, HECTOR GOMEZ...
AAAHH
"...LEGALIZED AMERICAN AS OF A YEAR AGO. PEELING RADISHES ONE MINUTE AND THE NEXT HE'S PEELING THE FACES OFF A COUPLE DINERS.
"TWO DEAD BEFORE THE STAFF WRESTLED HIM TO THE GROUND."
THIS WASN'T THE FIRST CRIME LIKE THIS RECENTLY, RIGHT? TEMPORARY MADNESS, FEARSOME ASSAULT?
YOU LOOK IN YOUR CRYSTAL BALL TO SEE THAT?
YES, WHILE A GYPSY VIOLINIST PLAYED IN THE BACKGROUND.
OR MAYBE... I SIMPLY READ IT IN THE NEWSPAPER.

TWO OTHERS ATTACKED. ONE DEAD AND THE OTHER CUT UP SO BADLY I BET HE WISHED HE'D DIED TOO.
AND BOTH OF THE VICTIMS WERE RICH?
BANKER DROPPING OFF HIS CAR AND THE VALET WENT NUTS, THE OTHER WAS ALL ALONE IN HER APARTMENT WHEN HER MAID WENT CRAZY-- SO NO, NEITHER VIC WAS HURTING FOR MONEY.
YOU THINK THERE'S A LINK, HUH? SOME KIND OF MAGICAL THING? MAKES SENSE.
YES, IT'S ALL QUITE OBVIOUS, ACTUALLY.
IF YOU LOOK FOR THE *SIGNS.*
SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S IN THE NEWSPAPERS, TOO, BUT YOU JUST HAVE TO WALK AROUND TO SEE IT FIRSTHAND: *EVERY CAT* IN LOWER MANHATTAN IS MYSTERIOUSLY DYING. STRAYS AND PETS ALIKE.
YEAH, CREEPY AS HELL. VETS THINK IT'S SOME KIND OF FELINE VIRUS.
THAT MAGIC, TOO? CATS AND WITCHES?
YES AND NO. LIKE YOU SAY, A VIRUS...
OF SORTS.
LET ME GIVE YOU A QUICK HISTORY LESSON--

--IN 1730s PARIS, THERE OCCURRED WHAT COULD ONLY BE CALLED A *CAT MASSACRE*.
STARVING APPRENTICES CAME TO VIEW CATS, THE PAMPERED PETS OF THEIR MASTERS, AS SYMBOLS OF THEIR OWN MISFORTUNE.
THESE BOYS SYSTEMATICALLY SLAUGHTERED ANY CAT THEY COULD FIND--MANY HUNDREDS, IN FACT.
SOME HISTORIANS AND THEORISTS REGARD THIS AS THE FIRST EMBER OF THE FIRE OF REVOLUTION THAT WOULD ENGULF FRANCE DECADES LATER. HOWEVER...
...A WITCH LIKE MYSELF CAN SEE IT AS SOMETHING EVEN BEYOND THAT.
THE CATS WERE A *SACRIFICE*--THE IDEA OF THEIR SLAUGHTER NO DOUBT PUT INTO THE BOYS' HEADS BY A POOR, STARVING WITCH OF THAT TIME.
A SACRIFICE?
A *TAIGHEIRM* AS THE ANCIENT SCOTS CALLED IT. THE KILLING OF CATS IN ORDER TO CONTROL HELL...
...AND THEREBY SUMMON A *SONNEILLON*.
IT'S THE MAGICAL EMBODIMENT OF ENVY, HATE, THE NEED TO PUNISH. IT TOOK TIME--DECADES--BUT ONCE ALIVE TO ROAM PARIS, IT ULTIMATELY INCITED THE MASSES TO *REVOLUTION.*
AND THIS THING--A SANOLLIAN?
SONNEILLON.
--YOU'RE SAYING ONE HAS BEEN CONJURED HERE IN LOWER MANHATTAN?
THIS IS A PART OF THE CITY WHERE TOO FREQUENTLY NOWADAYS THE *LESS FORTUNATE* ARE BEING DRIVEN OUT BY THOSE WEALTHIER AND MORE FORTUNATE. ENOUGH SO, AT LEAST, THAT THE SAME HATEFUL HEX COULD TAKE ROOT.

THE KILLERS-- ALL OF THEM-- ARE AS INNOCENT AS THEY CLAIM...
...IT IS THE SONNEILLON'S HATE-ENERGY SPREADING FROM ONE TO THE NEXT.
WAIT. THIS ISN'T MY FIELD OF EXPERTISE, SO LET ME SEE IF I'VE GOTTEN THIS STRAIGHT...
...A MAGICAL "HATE-VIRUS" HAS BEEN PLANTED IN PART OF THE CITY?
EXACTLY. AND IF UNABATED, LIKE ANY VIRUS, IT WILL SPREAD OUT EVEN FARTHER.
BUT WHO DID IT?
NO IDEA, THAT'S A MYSTERY THAT WILL NEED SOLVING.
WELL, DO YOU AT LEAST KNOW WHO ELSE HAS BEEN INFECTED? WHO THE NEXT KILLER IS GOING TO BE?
WHO?
WHY, IT'S *YOU*, DETECTIVE ERIKSON.
WHY DO YOU THINK I BROUGHT YOU HERE--FOR *CLUES? LATENT AURAS?*
NO, I WANTED YOU AWAY FROM EVERYONE, AND AS I'M SURE YOU KNOW, THERE'S NOTHING LONELIER THAN A CRIME SCENE WHEN EVERYONE'S LEFT IT.
B-BUT I'M NOT--I'M-- I DON'T FEEL HATRED--NO ENVY.
YOU WERE BORN POOR AND YOU'VE WORKED YOUR WAY UP FROM THE BOTTOM. AND ALTHOUGH YOU'D NEVER ADMIT IT, YOU DO THINK "ADVERSELY" ON THOSE YOU SEE AS BORN WITH A SILVER SPOON.
NO, I-- WAIT, HOW CAN YOU KNOW ALL THIS ABOUT ME, ANYWAY? WE'VE ONLY JUST MET!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?

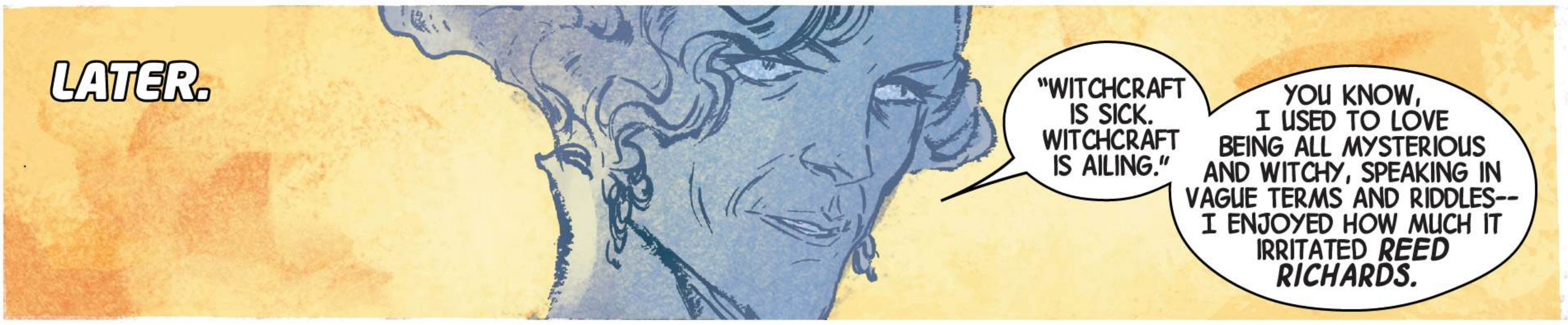
...I'M THE Scarlet Witch.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SAVING YOUR LIFE.
I'M SORRY, BUT THIS WILL HURT.

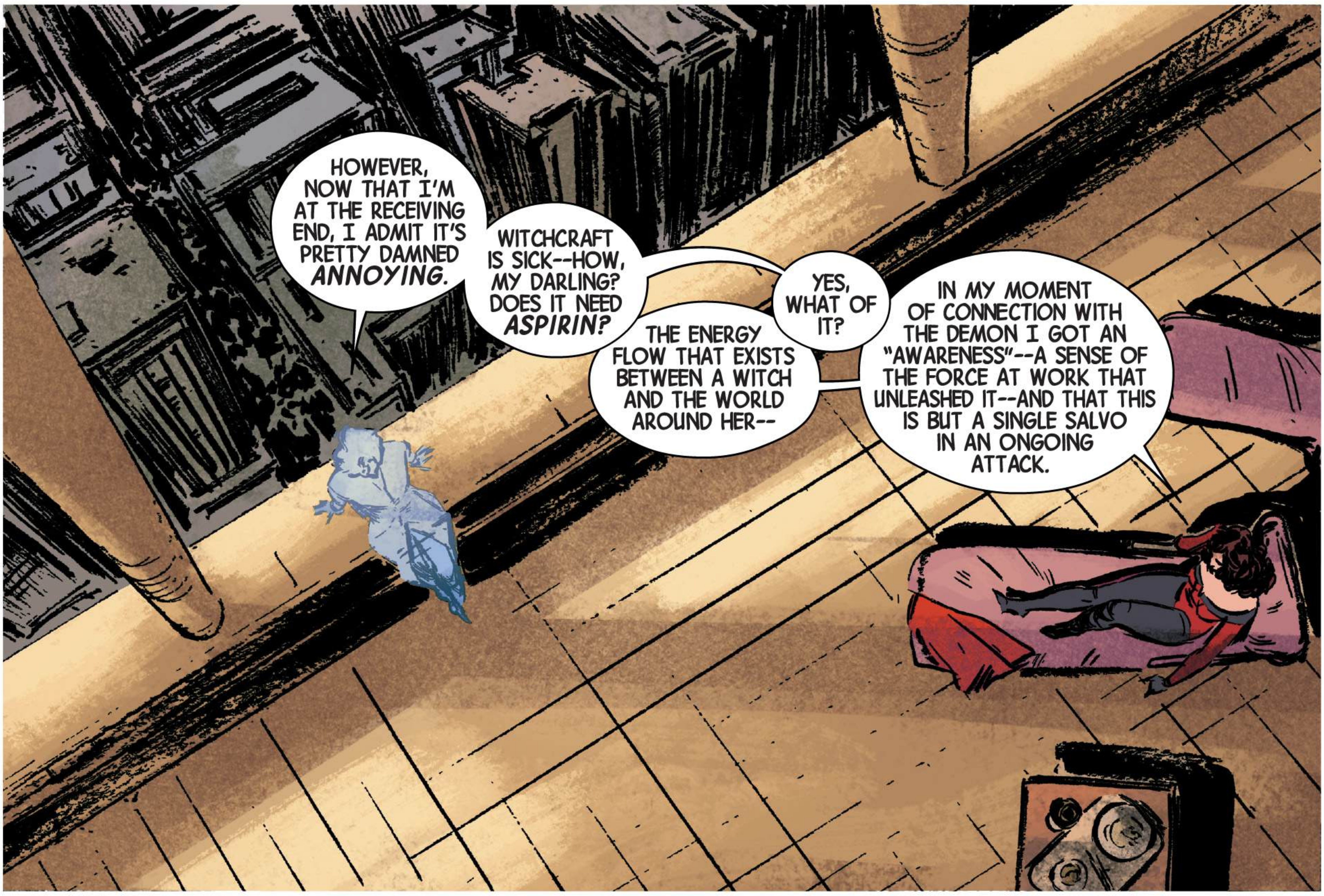
BZZT
AASSHH
EXORCISMS ALWAYS DO.

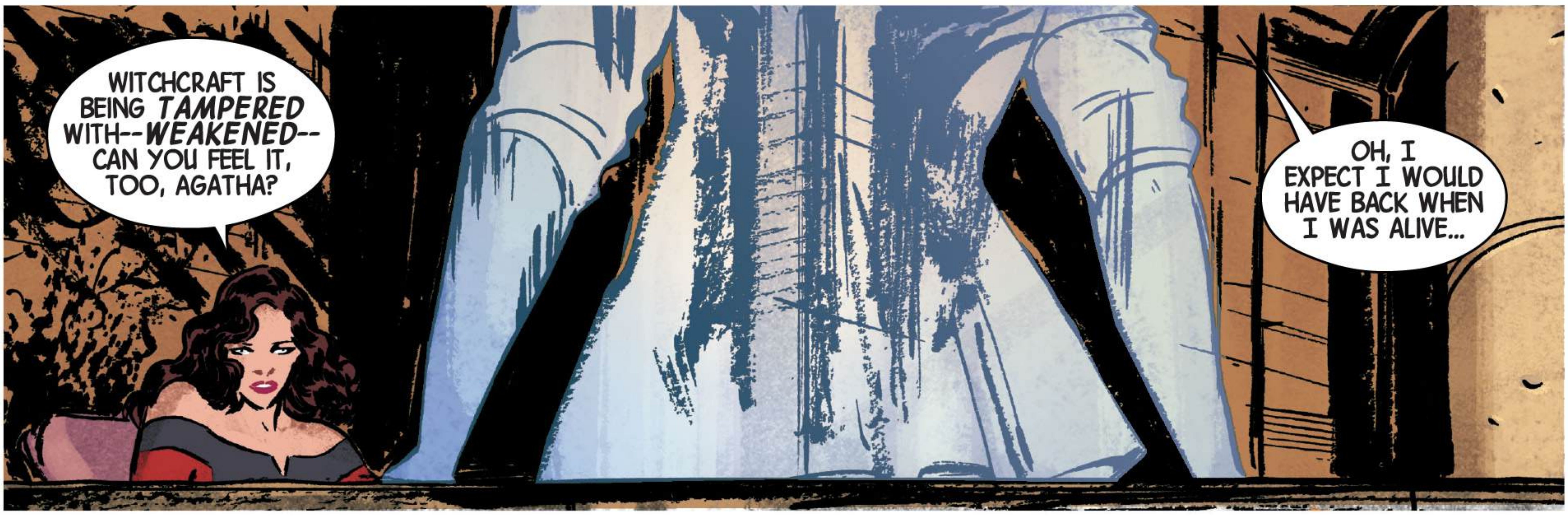
SCHHHSH
HISSS
HISS
AAANND...
...I GUESS IT WOULD BE SMART TO DECIDE MY NEXT MOVE RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
OR RATHER...
...MY *NEXT SPELL.*
NEED TO *MOVE* TOO, OF COURSE... STAY AWAY FROM ITS TALONS.

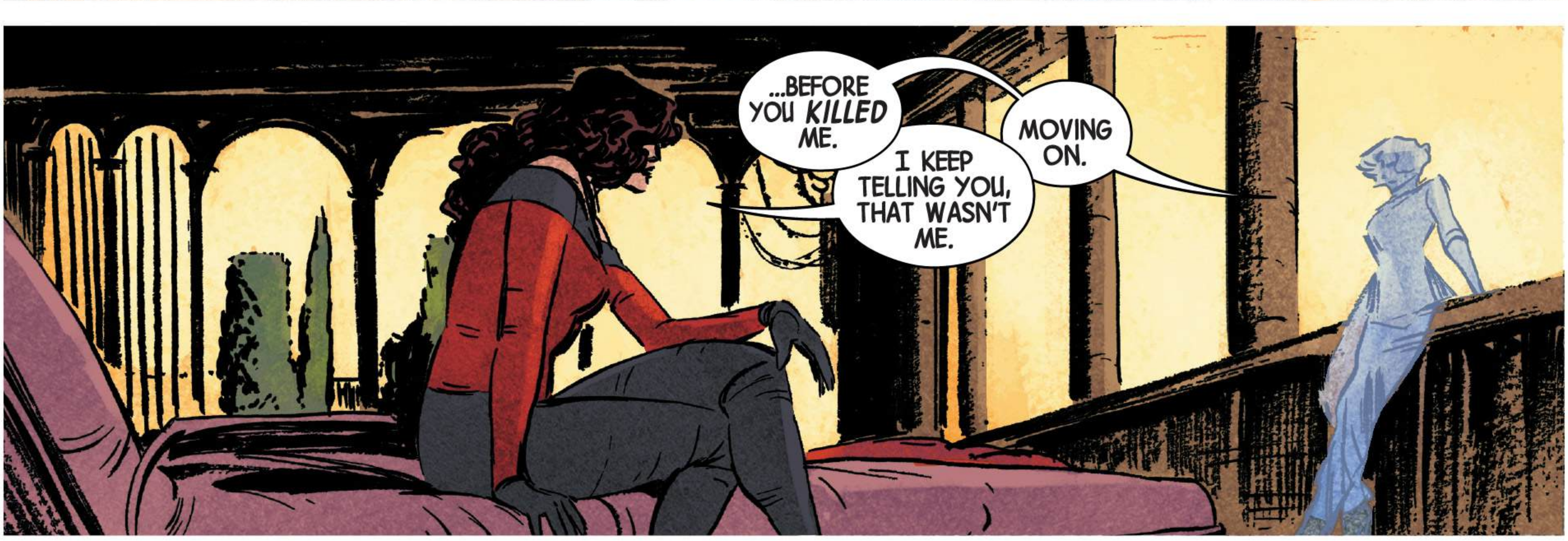
BUT I HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT THIS SONNEILLON WAS SUMMONED WITH THE MAGIC OF ANCIENT SCOTLAND...
...SO I MUST USE A *CELTIC* SPELL TO BANISH IT.
HERE, CREATURE!
I EVOKE THE POWER OF EXALTED *MORRIGAN* AND I *ORDER* YOU TO--
NO.
SOMETHING...
...SOMETHING'S WRONG.

DISTRACTED...
...BY WHAT I SENSED JUST THEN--
GHAA!
THACK
--WHAT I *FELT.*
NOW...
LET'S END *THIS,* SHALL WE?
BLAST
OW. YOU'RE RIGHT...THAT REALLY HURT.


LATER.
"WITCHCRAFT IS SICK. WITCHCRAFT IS AILING."
YOU KNOW, I USED TO LOVE BEING ALL MYSTERIOUS AND WITCHY, SPEAKING IN VAGUE TERMS AND RIDDLES-- I ENJOYED HOW MUCH IT IRRITATED REED RICHARDS.


HOWEVER, NOW THAT I'M AT THE RECEIVING END, I ADMIT IT'S PRETTY DAMNED ANNOYING.
WITCHCRAFT IS SICK--HOW, MY DARLING? DOES IT NEED ASPIRIN?
YES, WHAT OF IT?
THE ENERGY FLOW THAT EXISTS BETWEEN A WITCH AND THE WORLD AROUND HER--
IN MY MOMENT OF CONNECTION WITH THE DEMON I GOT AN "AWARENESS"--A SENSE OF THE FORCE AT WORK THAT UNLEASHED IT--AND THAT THIS IS BUT A SINGLE SALVO IN AN ONGOING ATTACK.


WITCHCRAFT IS BEING TAMPERED WITH--WEAKENED-- CAN YOU FEEL IT, TOO, AGATHA?
OH, I EXPECT I WOULD HAVE BACK WHEN I WAS ALIVE...


...BEFORE YOU KILLED ME.
I KEEP TELLING YOU, THAT WASN'T ME.
MOVING ON.

I NOW UNDERSTAND THE SYMBOLISM OF THE DREAM I HAD THIS MORNING, TOO-- HOW THE AVENGERS SHOULD STAY IN MY PAST...AS MUCH AS EVENTS ALLOW THEM TO, ANYWAY--
--THAT I'M ON MY OWN.
SO YOU INTEND TO HUNT DOWN THIS THREAT TO THE CRAFT, I ASSUME.
OF COURSE.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO TAKE THIS ON-- ALL THE SPELLS IT MAY REQUIRE OF YOU?...
...YOU AND I BOTH KNOW THE COSTS.
I NEED TO DO THIS, AGATHA, FOR WITCHCRAFT AND FOR ME, TOO. I NEED THIS FOR ME.
I'LL FIND THIS MENACE IF I HAVE TO GO AROUND THE WORLD OR MANY WORLDS.
WHOEVER IT IS, WHEREVER THEY ARE, THEY WILL KNOW WHAT IT MEANS...
...TO FACE THE SCARLET WITCH.

Thera
Akrotiri
Therasia
Aspronisi
25°20' E
36°30' N
36°20' N
N
200
100
Scarlet
Witch
2

THESEUS CLAIMED THAT HE KILLED ME.
HE LIED.
I LIVE ON.
CAREFUL.
IT'S HERE. I *KNOW* IT'S HERE.
SHH.
FORWARD.

THESE STREETS AND LANES ARE MY *LABYRINTH* NOW.
THE NIGHT'S DARKNESS IS MY *MAZE.*
WAIT, *WHAT'S* THAT NOISE?...
...FEET ON THE GROUND-- NO. *HOOVES*-- RUNNING.
CAN YOU SEE *ANYTHING?*
NEGATIVE. *NO.* I--
--CAN *HEAR* IT-- *WHY* CAN'T I SEE--
EEAEHRRRRHH
YES, THESEUS WAS A *LIAR.*

I *LIVE!*
I, MINOTAUR!

THE GREEK ISLAND OF SANTORINI.
WANDA, MY DEAR...
...THIS *IS* A SURPRISE. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
IT'S GOT TO BE ABOUT THE *MINOTAUR*, RIGHT? YOU'RE CERTAINLY NOT HERE FOR THE MOUSSAKA.
MINOTAUR? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. NO, MY GODDESS HEKATE, I SEEK YOUR WISDOM.
WELL, I HAVEN'T FELT WISE IN A WHILE, BUT I'LL DO MY BEST.
FOOD FIRST, THOUGH--I HAVE A BEAUTIFUL GRILLED GOAT--LEMON AND HERBS. YOU'LL LOVE IT.
FORGIVE ME, I'M SURE IT'S WONDERFUL...BUT I'M A VEGETARIAN.
OH. WELL, WHAT ABOUT SOME WINE? I HAVE A NICE RETSINA.
I DON'T DRINK EITHER, I'M AFRAID. NOT ANYMORE. I TAKE MEDICATION.
WANDA, YOU'RE SICK?
I'M--UM--HONESTLY, IT'S FOR TREATING DEPRESSION.
REALLY? I'D HAVE THOUGHT A WITCH OF YOUR ABILITIES COULD WIPE OUT ANY MALADY TO YOURSELF--PHYSICAL OR MENTAL--WITH A WAVE OF YOUR HAND.
NO MAGIC COMES WITHOUT A COST, NO CURE IS WITHOUT A CURSE. YOU KNOW THAT.
SO... NO MEAT OR ALCOHOL?
COFFEE? OR IS THAT OFF-LIMITS TOO?
YES, I'M *SUPER* FUN AT DINNER PARTIES.
I LOVE COFFEE.
THANK HERA FOR THAT.
COME. LET'S GO OUT BACK ONTO THE TERRACE AND YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT'S UP.

SIMPLY PUT, GODDESS, I HAVE QUESTIONS--
NO, MORE ACCURATELY *CONCERNS--* CONCERNS ABOUT WITCHCRAFT'S ENERGIES ABROAD IN THE WORLD AT PRESENT.
AND WHY COME TO ME ABOUT IT?
WELL, YOU ***ARE*** HEKATE, THE GREEK GODDESS OF WITCHES. SO THERE'S THAT.
HA. WHY, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I HAVEN'T CAST A SPELL IN *YEARS.* I'M CONTENT TO *SERVE* MY PATRONS.
YOU MEAN THIS LITTLE CAFE?
IT'S ALL I NEED. FOR NOW.
OF COURSE, I MIGHT CHANGE MY MIND IN A YEAR OR A WEEK AND DECIDE TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD. AGAIN.
OR BECOME A SUPER HERO LIKE VENUS AND HER HALF-BROTHER HERCULES. ARES, TOO, UNTIL HE DIED.
OF COURSE WE OF THE PANTHEON NEVER STAY DEAD FOR LONG. I'M SURE THE GOD OF WAR--HIS WEIRD LITTLE SON, TOO, FOR THAT MATTER--THEY'LL BOTH SET FOOT IN THE WORLD ANEW AT SOME POINT.
HOW IS HERCULES, BY THE WAY? STILL LOUD AND ANNOYING?
OH, HE'S NOT SO BAD, BUT WE'VE NEVER BEEN CLOSE. I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HE'S UP TO.

I NEED YOUR WISDOM, GODDESS HEKATE. FROM YOU AS A WITCH OF OLD--THE GREATEST WITCH TO THOSE WHO WORSHIPPED YOU.
I HAVEN'T BEEN THAT IN A LONG TIME.
THE PEOPLE'S FAITH IN A GOD-- THIS ONE OR THAT-- OFTEN THAT *BELIEF* IS WHAT MAKES THE GOD STRONG.
IT'S BEEN MANY SUMMERS SINCE I'VE SMELLED THE KISS OF IRON IN THE AIR FROM A BLOOD SACRIFICE IN MY NAME.
OH, THERE'S BLOOD IN THE AIR, ALL RIGHT, BUT NOT FOR ME.
STILL-- YOU RETAIN AN AWARENESS OF WITCHCRAFT'S ENERGIES--THE FLOW OF IT THROUGH THE ETHER?
PERHAPS.
THEN DOESN'T IT FEEL...BROKEN TO YOU?
...
YES.
IT HAS FOR A WHILE.

GODDESS, IS IT *ME?* HAVE THE BAD THINGS I'VE DONE IN THE PAST CAUSED THIS FRACTURE?
I WORRY THAT PERHAPS THIS "SICKNESS" WITHIN WITCHCRAFT IS THE CAUSE OF MY FRAGILE MENTAL STATE.
AS I SAID, I HAVEN'T CAST A HEX OR CONJURED OR FORETOLD IN MANY MOONS.
MY TIES TO THE CRAFT LIE SLEEPING LIKE ARES' OWN DEAD SOUL.
BECAUSE OF THIS, MY CONNECTION IS SLIGHT. WITCHCRAFT IN THE WORLD? I HAVE NO IDEA.
THIS ISLAND, HOWEVER? I'M VERSED ENOUGH STILL THAT I CAN SENSE IT HERE. SOMETHING MAGICAL ABIDES...
...AND IT IS DARK AND IT IS DEADLY. AND IF IT'S ANY INDICATION OF WITCHCRAFT FAR AND ABROAD--THEN YES, OUR HALLOWED ART IS VERY MUCH BROKEN.
THE DARK MAGIC YOU SPEAK OF HERE ON THE ISLAND--THE BLOOD IN THE AIR--I ASSUME YOU MEAN THIS *MINOTAUR* YOU SPOKE OF EARLIER?
THIS ISLAND BY DAY IS SOMEWHAT HOW IT USED TO BE...A PLACE OF LIGHT AND LAUGHTER.
IT IS THE NIGHT THAT BRINGS THE *TERROR.*

IN THE PAST, THE NIGHTS TOO WERE MERRIMENT AND MUSIC...LOVERS UNDER THE MOON.
NOW THE DOORS AND WINDOWS ARE LOCKED SHARPLY AS THE SUN TAKES ITS REST.
THE MINOTAUR WALKS THE STREETS, LOOKING, HUNTING.
LOCALS, TOURISTS. ONE, TWO. HERE, THERE, THE DEATH TOLL RISES.
GRACIOUS, WHY HASN'T SOMEONE CALLED THE *AVENGERS?*
I THOUGHT SOMEONE *HAD* AND THAT'S WHY YOU WERE HERE.
WHAT ABOUT THE GREEK ARMY?
THEY CAME. THEY FAILED.
MERCENARIES CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR IT, ALTHOUGH LESS WITH EACH THAT THE MINOTAUR SLAUGHTERS.
AND WHAT ABOUT SUPER HEROES? YOUR COUNTRY HAS SOME, SURELY.
JON AJAX, GREECE'S OWN "CAPTAIN AMERICA"... THEY BURIED HIM LAST WEEK.

THE MINOTAUR IS PROTECTED MAGICALLY, I CAN FEEL THAT--AND NOT RUN-OF-THE-MILL SPELLS EITHER, BUT RATHER BY BROKEN, TAINTED WITCHCRAFT OF THE KIND YOU DESCRIBE.
BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE PROTECTIVE AURA THAT IT'S UNDER RENDERS IT INVISIBLE TO ITS HUNTERS, SO THEY'RE BLIND TO ATTACKS.
SO IT'S THE CREATURE OF YORE BROUGHT BACK FROM THE DEAD, LIKE HERCULES--LIKE YOU SAY ARES MIGHT ONE DAY.
PERHAPS.
I FEEL--SOMETHING'S DIFFERENT ABOUT IT THIS TIME.
WANDA, I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD CLEAN UP THIS MESS. I WOULD OWE YOU...
...AND A GOD IN YOUR DEBT--EVEN A LAPSED ONE SUCH AS I--IS A GOOD THING TO HAVE UP YOUR SLEEVE.
SO, WANDA?
WHAT'S IT TO BE?
IT WILL BE DARK SOON...
"...I THINK I'LL TAKE A STROLL."

WHY DON'T WE PUT A STOP TO ALL THIS SILLINESS...?

...I SEE YOU, YOU KNOW.
I HAVE THE SIGHT.
THE *"WITCH'S SIGHT."*
IT SHOWS ME WHERE YOU ARE, INVISIBLE OR NOT. HIDING OR NOT.
I SEE YOUR EVIL. I SEE YOUR PAIN. AND *MORE* IMPORTANTLY...
...I SEE YOU FOR WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
I...AM... MINOTAUR!
NO.
YOU'VE BEEN ENCHANTED SOMEHOW.
SOMEONE HAS HEXED YOU. MADE YOU INVISIBLE TO EVERYONE... BUT ME.
YOU HAVE MORE POWER, TOO--THE POWER OF THE ORIGINAL MINOTAUR...
...BUT THAT'S NOT WHO YOU ARE.
I...
...AM...
YOUR REAL NAME IS ***WILLIAM TAURENS.*** ALSO KNOWN AS ***MAN-BULL.***
YOU WERE ALTERED SCIENTIFICALLY.
AND AT BEST, YOU'RE A SECOND-RATE VILLAIN.

...MINOTAUR!
GHH
WELL, HE CERTAINLY HAS THE MINOTAUR'S *POWERS*--
STRONGER-- AND *WAY* FASTER--
HEKATE WAS CORRECT--
HE'S BEEN MAGICALLY IMBUED--
--CAN'T DEFEAT HIM THE WAY HE IS.

I NEED--
A *DISTRACTION!*
BUT THAT'S ALL IT IS, JUST A DISTRACTION.
IT WON'T STOP HIM. HE'LL KEEP COMING.
WHAT THIS REALLY REQUIRES--IS SOMETHING *GREATER* STILL THAN THE MAGIC THAT EMPOWERS HIM--
GHA!
--TO DEFEAT THE "BEAST" WITHIN--
--A HEX FROM THE *CHUVIHANI* OF MY HOMELAND--
--LINKED TO *ME* BY MY *BIRTH* AND *BLOOD* FOR ADDED POWER.
AND LINKED TO *ANIMALS*-- THE ONENESS THAT MY PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS SHARED--
NO!
--TO PURGE HIM OF THE RANK, BASE ENCHANTMENT THAT ENVELOPS HIM.

NN--MY POWERS--
WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
I WAS... I...I WAS A *GOD*. BORN ON CRETE, THE SON OF *ZEUS!*
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT...AND THOSE WERE *MY* POWERS. THE MIGHT OF A GOD!
NOW...I'M JUST WILLIAM TAURENS. BIG, UGLY BILL FROM CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY...
YOU MADE ME A FREAK AGAIN.
NOT A GOD, A *JOKE.*
SECOND-RATE...
...A SECOND-RATE FREAK!!!
QUICK, NEED ONE MORE ROMA HEX-- PROTECTIVE SHIELD--
NOT STRONG ENOUGH FOR THE MINOTAUR BUT EASILY ENOUGH FOR MAN-B--
I CAN'T GO BACK!

CAN'T GO...
...BACK.
KRSHHHH

DAWN.
IT'S NOT OVER, IS IT?
OH, HELLO, AGATHA. YOU STARTLED ME.
SO? I'M DEAD, REMEMBER? I HAVE SO FEW PLEASURES, ALLOW ME SOME FUN.
AND NO, OF COURSE IT'S NOT OVER. FAR FROM IT, I'D SAY.
SOMEONE USED MAGIC TO SUMMON MAN-BULL OVER FROM THE STATES, GAVE HIM THE POWERS OF A GOD AND SENT HIM ON HIS MERRY WAY.
AND YOU'RE SURE IT WASN'T HEKATE PLAYING YOU?
AGATHA HARKNESS, YOU SUSPICIOUS OLD THING.
IT'S JUST... SHE WASN'T ALWAYS SUCH A NICE PERSON.
HEKATE'S NOT A "PERSON," SHE'S A GODDESS.
AND I'D KNOW IF IT WAS HER. NO, SHE'S MORE THAN CONTENT WITH HER HOMEMADE TZATZIKI AND GRILLED GOAT.
BUT IT WAS *SOMEONE*.
AND THAT'S NOT WHAT BOTHERS ME MOST...
...ALL MAGIC HAS A COST, AS YOU KNOW...AND A GOOD WITCH, WARLOCK OR MAGE MAKES SURE THEY PAY THE COST OF THE SPELLS THEY CAST.
I MEAN, LOOK AT ME. AFTER TODAY'S FUN AND GAMES--A FEW MORE LINES AND GREY HAIRS FOR SURE.
THE MIRROR SHOWS HOW MY SPELLS ARE AGING MY SOUL--HOW SOON I'LL DIE, EVEN IF TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD I STILL LOOK YOUNG.
DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF, YOU DON'T LOOK *THAT* YOUNG.
I'LL IGNORE THAT REMARK.
IF YOU LIKE. I MAY REPEAT IT LATER, THOUGH.
HA, I LOVE YOU, AGATHA.
SO WHAT ABOUT THE "COST" BOTHERS YOU?
WELL, WHEN A BAD WITCH CASTS MAGIC THEY USUALLY DON'T PAY--THEY REFUSE TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE. IT'S EVERYTHING AROUND THEM THAT PAYS INSTEAD...
...WHOEVER ENTRANCED MAN-BULL INTO THINKING HE WAS A GOD ALSO GAVE HIM THE STRENGTH TO TAKE ON THE GREEK ARMY, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE...
...THAT TOOK *BIG MAGIC*.

"...SO IF WHOEVER IS CASTING IT ISN'T ACCOUNTING FOR THEMSELVES..."
"...THEN I FEAR FOR WHATEVER AROUND THEM THAT'S MAKING THE PAYMENT."
HA. Y'LOOKING TIRED, HEKATE, ME OLD DARLIN'.
SURE, 'N HAVE Y'SELF A WEE NAP.

1 variant by **Kevin Wada**

Scarlet Witch

3

PLEASE!
LAGOS, NIGERIA.
I SWEAR TO YOU, I'M NOT WHOEVER YOU THINK I AM.
THIS IS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING!
OH, BUT Y'ARE, OLD SPORT. AYE, YOU'RE THE MAN. N'A RIGHT SPECIAL ONE, TO BOOT.
I BEEN LOOKING FOR THE DESCENDANTS O'THOSE WHO WRONGED ME--THE TUATHA DE DANANN--BEEN WIPING YOU ALL OFF THE FACE OF THE PLANET TOO, SO I HAVE.
'COURSE, WHEN THE WRONG HAPPENED BACK IN 600 B.C., THOSE IRISH WIZARDS--YOUR FOREFATHER N'HIS PALS--WELL, Y'CAN IMAGINE--LOT OF MULTIPLICATION OVER ALL'A YEARS.
AYE, THIS WAS LONG BEFORE I CALLED M'SELF THE EMERALD WARLOCK. HONESTLY I'VE LOST TRACK OF HOW MANY'A YA'S I'VE SENT TO THE GREAT BEYOND. TENS OF THOUSANDS. AND ALL O'YA THE SAME--"NOT ME," "I'M INNOCENT."
YEAH, I HEARD IT ALL.
YOU'RE PAYIN' FOR THE PAST, FELLA.
Y'ANCESTORS DID ME N'MY MAM, N'M'BROTHERS, TOO--NOT THAT I CARED SO MUCH ABOUT M'BROTHERS, IF I'M PERFECTLY HONEST.

PLEASE.
DON'T CHEAPEN Y'SELF. DIE LIKE A MAN. N'BE THANKFUL YOU HAVEN'T FAMILY F'ME TO KILL ALONG WITH YOU.
I'M BY NO MEANS A KIND MAN, BUT KILLIN' BABIES--IT'S NA' SOMETHING I DO WITH ANY JOY.
THO', I'VE DONE IT ENOUGH.
ANYWAY, YOU'RE THE LAST, THE VERY LAST. THAT'S WHAT MAKES Y'SPECIAL. I'M DONE HUNTING. I'VE WIPED THE BLOODLINES OF EVERY WAYWARD FELLA CROSSED ME BACK THEN.
I KNOW A BIT ABOUT YOU, DOUGLAS SOTINWA. DONE M'HOMEWORK 'FORE I CAME F'YOU.
YOU'RE A YOUNG LADDIE FULL O'HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. GOT Y'EYE ON BEIN' A PILOT. YOU LIKE THE WILD BLUE YONDER, I'M THINKIN'.
SO I'LL GIVE YOU THAT AS A LAST WISH.
COURSE, M'GUESSING YOUR WISH AT THIS MOMENT IS TO NOT DIE AT ALL BUT THAT AIN'T IN THE CARDS. NO.
THIS IS THE BEST I CAN OFFER.
BYE NOW.

THERE. S'DONE.
NOW ALL I HAVE LEFT FOR M'PETTY OL'SELF TO EXACT REVENGE ON IS THE PLACE WHERE IT ALL HAPPENED.
AYE...

"...IRELAND."
DUBLIN
DUBLIN...
...IS *NOT* WHAT I IMAGINED.

BASED ON MY FIRST IMPRESSION, ANYWAY. THIS AIRPORT. ALL VERY MODERN.
I SUPPOSE IT'S THE TOURISM INDUSTRY WANTING EVERYONE TO THINK IT'S STILL LIKE THAT OLD JOHN WAYNE FILM, *THE QUIET MAN*.
ALL GREEN FIELDS, DRUNKEN POETS AND OLD LADIES IN SHAWLS.
BUT IF THESE SURROUNDINGS ARE ANYTHING TO GO BY, THE IRELAND OF *YEATS* AND *JOYCE* ARE LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY.
GOOD TO KNOW.
NOW, NOT THAT I DON'T ADORE YOUR ODD MUSINGS AND INTROSPECTIVE SOUND BITES...
...BUT CAN YOU TELL ME WHY WE ARE HERE AGAIN?
WELL, I CAN TELL YOU WHY *I'M* HERE, AGATHA, BUT WHAT I'M NOT SO CLEAR ABOUT...
...IS WHY ARE *YOU* HERE?
WHAT WAS I GOING TO DO OTHERWISE, FLOAT AROUND YOUR APARTMENT AND TERRORIZE THE CLEANER?
POOR ROSITA. IT REALLY ISN'T FUNNY WHAT YOU PUT HER THROUGH.
I'M A GHOST, REMEMBER? THANKS TO YOU. MY PLEASURES ARE FEW.

ANYWAY, THE MAIN REASON I'M WITH YOU IS...THAT I SENSED I SHOULD BE. THAT'S ALL I HAVE AT THE MOMENT--ALL I KNOW.
FINE. THANK YOU, BY THE WAY.
AND IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION--WHICH I'M SURPRISED YOU NEED ANSWERED AT ALL--IT'S NOT LIKE IT HASN'T BEEN ALL OVER THE NEWS...
...IRELAND IS *DYING.*
SUDDENLY EVERY ASPECT OF IRELAND'S ECONOMY THAT'S DERIVED FROM THE LAND IS FAILING.
FIELDS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY HAVE GONE FALLOW.
MINES--ALUMINUM, ZINC AND LEAD--ARE SUDDENLY FULL OF LETHAL GASES NO PUMPS CAN CLEAR.
CATTLE ARE DYING. NO MEAT OR MILK EXPORTS.
ALL AT ONCE AND ALL OF A SUDDEN.
YOU SUSPECT WITCHCRAFT?
I *KNOW* IT. BROKEN WITCHCRAFT, BAD WITCHCRAFT. ALL THAT I'VE SWORN TO CURE.

EVEN HERE--THIS MODERN AIRPORT, I FEEL THE OLD WAYS--
THE COUNTRY'S ALWAYS BEEN RIFE WITH MAGIC...AT LEAST IN TERMS OF STORY AND LEGEND.
I WONDER WHAT THEY'D SAY--PEOPLE HERE--IF THEY KNEW SO MANY OF THEIR MYTHS HAD A GOOD AMOUNT OF REALITY TO THEM.
PROBABLY JUST NOD THEIR HEADS AND ORDER ANOTHER PINT, THE LOT OF THEM.
DOESN'T FEEL VERY MAGICAL HERE THOUGH, IF YOU ASK ME.
AGATHA HARKNESS? FOR SHAME. WHEN DID YOU BECOME SUCH A GRUMPY OLD HAG?
DUBLIN'S FULL OF THE ART, LIGHT AND DARK BOTH--I CAN FEEL THE ENERGY FLOWING THROUGH ME--I COULD FROM THE MOMENT I GOT OFF THE PLANE.
HMPH.
"HMPH." THAT'S ALL YOU GOT?
THIS ISN'T WHERE WE NEED TO BE ANYWAY. COME ON. LET'S SEE WHAT THE COUNTRYSIDE HAS TO OFFER.
OH. YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING, THEN?
NO.
BUT I KNOW WHERE THE MAGIC IS LEADING ME.
TAXI
AN' DARLIN'...
...WHERE YOU'RE LED, I'LL FOLLOW ALONG.

COUNTY WEXFORD.
(TWO HOURS SOUTH OF DUBLIN.)
ACTUALLY, THINKING ABOUT IT, THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE IRELAND YOU ENVISAGED, WANDA.
GREEN. BUCOLIC.
BUT LOOKING AT IT NOW--
NOW? YOU WEREN'T EXAGGERATING-- LOOKS LIKE A PLAGUE'S SWEPT THROUGH IT.
"I ASKED YOU EARLIER WHY WE WERE HERE AND YOU ANSWERED, WANDA..."
...BUT I'LL ASK YOU AGAIN, WHY *HERE?* THIS ROAD, THIS FIELD...WHERE THERE'S NOTHING BUT DESOLATION.
THAT'S NOT TRUE, AGATHA, THERE ARE *MEMORIES...*
"...OF A *BATTLE* FOUGHT."
LET'S KEEP DRIVING. NOT MUCH FURTHER, THOUGH...
...WE'RE CLOSE.

I *DON'T CARE* WHAT'S GOING ON, GIRLY...
The Fallen Woman
...YOU'RE *NOT* HAVING MY BAR.
SIR. I ASSURE YOU, I HAVE NO DESIGNS ON YOUR ESTABLISHMENT. I JUST NEED TO BE ON THIS SITE FOR A SHORT TIME SO I CAN ADDRESS THE SPELL THAT AILS THE LAND. MY NAME IS--
I *KNOW* WHO Y'ARE. RED WITCH. *SCARLET* WITCH. N'I KNOW WHAT'CHA DONE IN THE PAST--Y'EVIL, SO Y'ARE.
THE PAST-- I'D LIKE TO LEAVE IT THERE, IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU.
I'M HERE TO HELP. YOU, THOSE AROUND YOU NEAR AND FAR AWAY. THE WHOLE OF IRELAND.
N'Y'LL GET INTA SOME MAGICAL BARNY N'LEVEL M'PUB IN THE PROCESS. I WATCH THE NEWS, I SEEN IT HAPPEN WIT'ME OWN EYES.
THIS IS THE LOCATION WHERE WHATEVER IS HURTING THE COUNTRY IS EMANATING FROM.
THE DEVASTATION HAS HIS ROOT HERE, ON THIS SPOT.

AWW, POPPYCOCK! MY WEE PLACE, S'BEEN NOTHIN' TA NO ONE FOR AS LONG AS IT'S STOOD THERE.
NO, SOMETHING HAPPENED HERE-- A BATTLE BACK CENTURIES PAST THAT'S SOMEHOW TIED TO WHAT'S GOING ON ALL OVER IRELAND NOW.
EVEN THE NAME OF YOUR PUB--"THE FALLEN WOMAN"--
NAMED AFTER A LADY OF THE EVENIN', PERHAPS TOOK A DRINK OR A FELLA HERE HERSELF BACK IN THE DAY.
IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK? I GUESS I WOULD, TOO. NO...
"...I BELIEVE SHE FELL IN *BATTLE*."
WELL, I DON'T CARE WHERE SHE FELL-- IN A FIGHT OR DOWN THE STEPS--I'LL NOT HAVE YOU IN HERE, DOING WHATEVER IT IS YOU'VE A MIND TA.
DON'T BE SUCH N'OLD TOSSPOT, FINN. SHE'S AN *AVENGER*, AIN'T SHE? SHE'S GOIN' TA DO WHAT SHE'S GOING TA DO, N'MATTER WHAT YE SAY, SO SHOW HER SOME GRACE, WHY DON'CHA?
'SIDES, MY LAND NEEDS THE HELP SHE'S FIXIN' TO GIVE IT. ME'N MOST ALL AROUND, SO SHUT Y'SQUALLIN', MATE, OR YE'LL FEEL MY BOOT ON Y'BEHIND.
HMPH.
THANK YOU.
NAME'S SEAN, BUT MOST PEOPLE CALL ME *SULLY*. YOU O'COURSE NEED NO INTRODUCTION...

...MS. MAXIMOFF.
"I HAVE TO UNDO THIS PLAGUE..."
...AND THE GOOD THING ABOUT PLAGUE SPELLS IS THERE'S A FLOW TO THEM, BACK AND FORTH LIKE A TIDE.
PLANT A STRONG ENOUGH HEALING HEX AND THIS COUNTRY WILL BOUNCE BACK AS QUICKLY AS IT FELL TO WHATEVER'S HURTING IT.
WELL, I THINK I'LL HAVE ME'SELF A WEE DRAM N'WATCH YOU DO IT, IF IT'S ALL THE SAME.
WATCH M'PROPERTY IS ALL I ASK.
DON'T LISTEN TO THAT OL'EJIT. GO AHEAD WITH THE WITCHY WAYS, ME DARLIN'.
JUST BE MINDFUL O' THE GLASSES N' CHAIRS.
YOU CAN DO IT, WANDA.
JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES.

THIS SPELL COULD BE MY END...
...ANY...EVERY SPELL TAKING DAYS AND YEARS FROM ME.
THE BIGGER, THE WORSE IT IS...
...AND THIS IS A MIGHTY HEX, INDEED.
BÍ SLÁINTIÚIL
I BEGIN TO SHAPE THE TRIQUETRA WITH MY GESTURES...
...AND TRY NOT TO THINK OF MY OWN PERIL.
FOR I AM A WITCH.
A GOOD WITCH!
AND THIS, THE WORLD WILL KNOW...

...EVEN AT THE COST OF MY LIFE.
COSAINT!
WANDA, YOUR HEALING SPELL--
M'BAR! GOD, WOMAN, LOOK WHAT'CHUV DONE!
NEVER MIND THAT! STAY WITH ME, I'LL SHIELD--
DON'T WORRY, I-I'VE GOT THIS.
SPELL AND DEFENSE-- BOTH--I CAN DO BO--
ARHHH
WANDA!
WANDA! ARE YE--
I'M FINE.
I RECOGNIZE THEM, WANDA. GHOSTS LIKE ME--
THE SLUAGH! "IRISH SINNERS" AS THEY WERE KNOWN--THEY RIDE IN THE NIGHT.
WELL, THEY CAN KEEP ON RIDING!

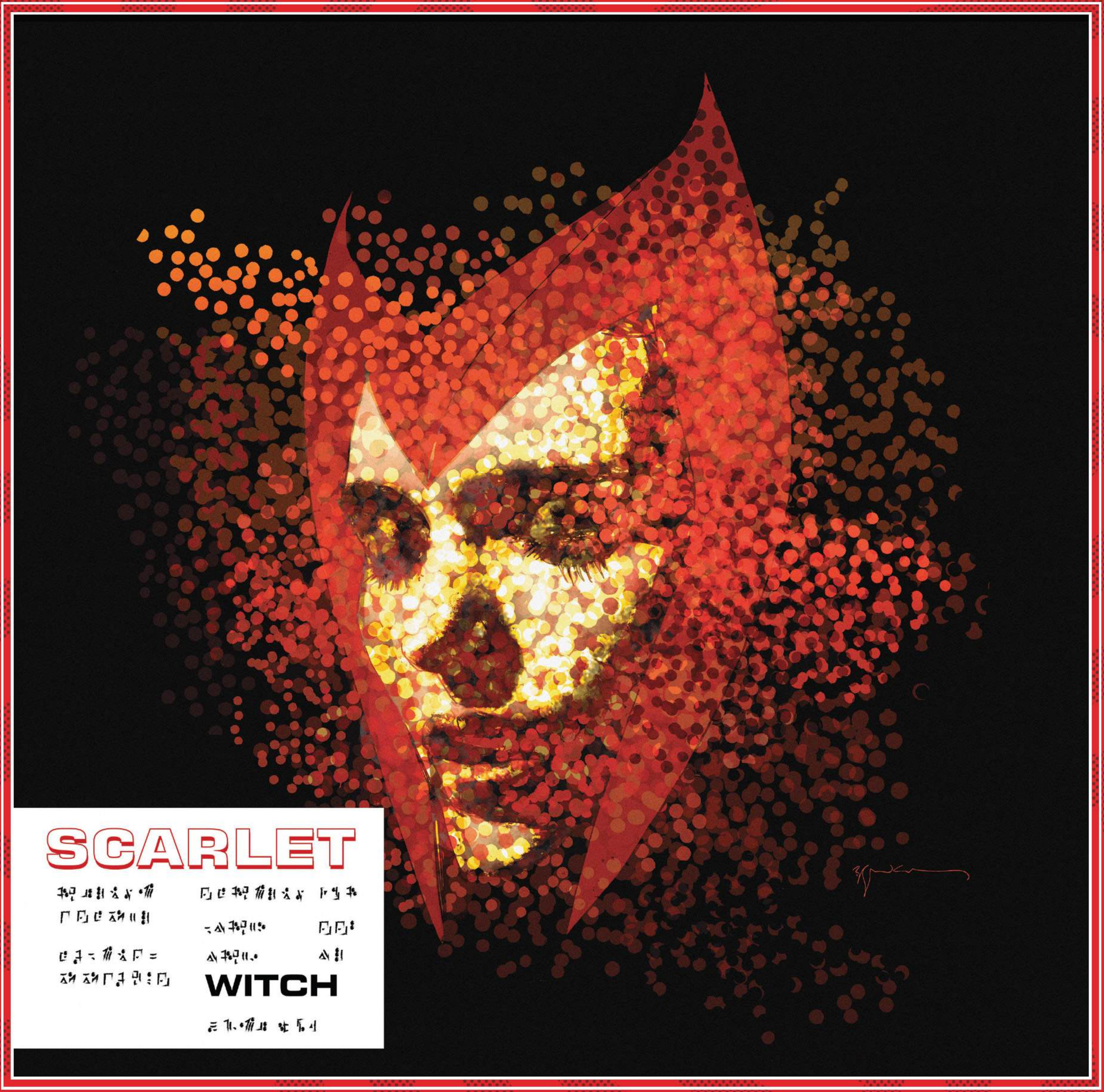
IMIGH SA DIABHAL!

MY PUB.
I BLEEDIN' *KNEW* YOU'D--
THAT'S MY GIRL.
I DID IT.
AYE, SO YOU DID.
NO.
I DIDN'T.
OH, I LIFTED THE CURSE FROM IRELAND HOPEFULLY--WE'LL KNOW FOR SURE WHEN THE SUN RISES--STILL...
YES, WANDA? WHAT?
...SLUAGH ARE KNOWN FOR ACTS OF MALICE, SURE, BUT THERE WAS *SOMEONE* AT WORK HERE--
WHO'S SHE TALKIN' TO?
NOT A BLESSED CLUE.
--*CONTROLLING* THESE ENTITIES--
--SOMEONE WITH THE AGENDA TO PUNISH THIS LAND FOR A PAST WRONG.
THE BATTLE, LONG AGO--THE WOMAN WHO FOUGHT IN IT--WHO WAS LOST OR FELL. HOW DOES THAT ALL TIE INTO IRELAND NOW? WE STILL DON'T KNOW.
YES, WHO'S BEHIND ALL THIS?
THAT'S THE QUESTION, EH? A *WITCH*, I'M CERTAIN OF THAT...SO I CAN ONLY THINK OF ONE PLACE TO FIND THE ANSWER.

THE WITCHES' ROAD.
EXACTLY.
IF THIS IS THE DARK WORK OF A FELLOW WITCH, THE ROAD WILL LEAD US TO HER. BETTER THAN MY FOLLOWING A TRAIL OF ENERGY AROUND THE WORLD LIKE A HOUND WHO CAUGHT THE SCENT OF A FOX.
I'VE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GO THERE ALONE SINCE MY DEATH, BUT...IF YOU OPEN THE DOORWAY TO SET FOOT ON THE PATH... I CAN FOLLOW YOU.
THEN STEP LIVELY, OLD WOMAN...

...AND LET'S SEE WHERE IT TAKES US.
URRH.
THE STEP-THROUGH ALWAYS MAKES ME QUEASY, I SUPPOSE THAT WAY I RARELY--
HELLO...
...DO I KNOW YOU? YOU LOOK FAMILIAR.
I'M NOT SURE, IT DOES SEEM AS IF--
I'M WANDA.

AND I'M KNOWN BY MANY NAMES, MOST NOTABLY...
...THE SCARLET WITCH.


SCARLET
WITCH

1 Hip-Hop variant by **Bill Sienkiewicz**

Scarlet
Witch
4

ALTHOUGH I'M A WITCH...
...I CONFESS *THE WITCHES' ROAD*, ISN'T A PATH I'VE WALKED TOO OFTEN.
IT SCARES ME, IF I'M TRUTHFUL.
BUT FEARFUL OR NOT, HERE I STAND UPON IT TODAY IN SEARCH OF A GREAT EVIL--THE WITCH WHO CAST THE WASTING CURSE THAT CRIPPLED IRELAND.
BEFORE ME NOW STANDS SOMEONE...
...DO I KNOW YOU? YOU LOOK FAMILIAR.
...ALTHOUGH I QUESTION WHETHER THIS IS A VISION, AN ILLUSION MEANT TO CHALLENGE MY FRAGILE SANITY.
I'M NOT SURE, IT DOES SEEM AS IF--
CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY, CHILD.
I'M WANDA.
I'VE NEVER MET THIS WOMAN BEFORE. NEVER. AND YET--AND YET I'M CERTAIN--
AND I'M KNOWN BY MANY NAMES, MOST NOTABLY...
...*THE SCARLET WITCH.*
--THAT IT'S MY *MOTHER* WHO STANDS BEFORE ME.

AGATHA?
YES, WANDA, IT'S YOUR MOTHER--YOUR REAL, TRUE MOTHER.
SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL.
YES. SHE WAS. WITH A BRIGHT, GOLDEN SOUL.
OH AGATHA! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?
QUITE SIMPLY, MY DEAR...
...IT WASN'T YOUR TIME TO KNOW.
I'M NATALYA MAXIMOFF.
NATALYA...
...YOU SAID I LOOK *FAMILIAR*, DOES THAT MEAN YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
BE CAREFUL, WANDA. TIME IS A VAGUE THING ON THE WITCHES' ROAD.
IF IT'S YOUR MOTHER FROM AN EARLIER ERA, FOREKNOWLEDGE GIVEN HERE MIGHT CHANGE EVENTS IN THE FUTURE.
AND IF SHE'S A GHOST, SHOCKING HER WITH THE TRUTH UNKNOWN WILL BRING HARM TO HER.
TREAT HER AS A STRANGER.
WHY DOES IT SEEM LIKE I'VE ALREADY MET YOU, WANDA?
I KNOW YOU'RE IMPORTANT. *THAT* I CAN TELL.
BUT--YOU'RE MORE THAN THAT TO ME...AREN'T YOU?
I'M YOUR--I'M--
WANDA. NO.
A RELATIVE, PERHAPS. A DISTANT RELATIVE--MY NAME IS MAXIMOFF, TOO AND OUR PEOPLE TRAVEL--SO PERHAPS AT ONE TIME LONG AGO WE WERE...
...FAMILY.
I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M HERE...CERTAINLY NO IDEA WHY YOU ARE...
...BUT I KNOW I HAVE TO PROTECT YOU FROM SOMETHING. A THREAT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YOURSELF.
ALTHOUGH EVEN *THAT* I DON'T COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND, AS I CAN SENSE YOU'RE A MIGHTY WITCH IN YOUR OWN RIGHT...
YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, OF COURSE.
THE WITCHES' ROAD. THE PLANE OF EXISTENCE WHERE ONLY THOSE SUCH AS WE CAN TREAD.
YES, BUT THERE ARE FORKS IN THE ROAD...SOME LEAD TO *LIGHT* AND OTHERS TO *DARKNESS.*
NATALYA, DOES THE WORLD KNOW ABOUT YOU? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANOTHER SCARLET WITCH BEFORE.
I'M SURPRISED AT THE QUESTION--YOU'RE ROMA, LIKE I AM, SO YOU KNOW HOW DISTRUSTED WE ARE. AS WITCHES TOO, WE'RE DOUBLY FEARED. I OPERATE FROM THE *SHADOWS.*
OH, THERE ARE SOME WHO KNOW OF ME--*ULYSSES BLOODSTONE* AND HIS COLLEAGUE THE *ETERNAL MAKKARI*--BUT TO MOST OF EUROPE, WHERE I OPERATE, I'M A MYTH...
...A *WHISPER.*
WHY DO I HAVE SUCH FEELINGS TOWARDS YOU, WANDA...SUCH *INTENSE* FEELINGS?
I'M HAPPY TOO, MEETING Y--
WANDA...
...STAND BACK! I SENSE A PRESENCE. A *MULO* OF SOME KIND!
COME OUT, CREATURE! MONSTER! WHATEVER FOULNESS YOU ARE!
GRRRR

COME OUT AND FACE THE *SCARLET WITCH!*
GGGGRRRR
KRSHHHHHH
MAHRIME *BEAST!*

GRRRR
NNAHHHH!
GHAAAAA
OH, WE'RE NOT DONE, MULO, THAT FIRST HEX WAS JUST TO *WEAKEN* YOU...
...THIS ONE WILL END IT!
NASH AVRI!

AMAZING.
THERE. IT'S DONE.
AND NOW IT'S UP TO YOU.
BE CAREFUL, WANDA MY DEAR...FOR THERE'S GREATER DANGER THAN THIS AHEAD AND Y--
OH.
HOW SAD...HOW SILLY...
...IT'S ONLY AS I FADE FROM YOU, THAT I SENSE WHO YOU ARE...
...ALTHOUGH, IN MY TIME, I HAVE MET NO MAN--YOU'RE YET TO EVEN BE BORN...
...MY *RINKINI CHIKNI*--YES. YOU, MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHT--

OH, AGATHA-- THAT WAS MY MOTHER--I...I WANTED TO SPEAK...
NATALYA'S SPIRIT IS ETERNAL. I PROMISE YOU, YOU'LL GET THE CHANCE TO CHAT AT THE CAMPFIRE AND EAT ROAST HEDGEHOG OR WHATEVER MUCK YOU PEOPLE CALL FINE DINING.
SHE CALLED HERSELF THE SCARLET WITCH...
DID YOU THINK YOU WERE THE *FIRST?*
HONESTLY, I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
IT CAME INTO MY HEAD FULLY FORMED--THE MOMENT I REALIZED MY POWERS I KNEW... I WAS THE SCARLET WITCH.
AS WAS THE CASE WITH YOUR MOTHER, AND HER MOTHER BEFORE HER.
BUT NOW YOU HAVE A TASK AT HAND, SO KEEP THAT IN MIND.
YES, AGATHA, YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE...
...YOU MEAN BITCH.
I LOVE YOU TOO, MY DEAR.
ONE THING TROUBLES ME, THOUGH.
THE MONSTER YOUR MOTHER FOUGHT WAS A *PHOOKA*--IRISH AGAIN. AND I'M GUESSING YOUR MOTHER CAME TO FIGHT IT INSTEAD OF YOU--
--BECAUSE IT WAS SUMMONED HERE BY A *TIME-LOST SPELL...*
MEANING?
TIME USED AS A *LOCK*--AN ADDED DEFENSE SO THE SPELL CAN'T BE UNDONE BY SOMEONE IN THE PRESENT. A MAGICAL *"BOOBY TRAP."* ONLY AN *ANCIENT* WITCH WOULD KNOW SUCH A THING. AND *IRISH.*
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON I CAN THINK OF WHO HAS THESE TRAITS, WANDA. NOT A WITCH, BUT A *WARLOCK*. BUT I THOUGHT HE WAS...
WELL, THE BRIARS OF THE PATH ARE CERTAINLY CHANGING TO SOMETHING A MALE'S ENERGY WOULD CRAFT AND--
BEHOLD!...

...A VISION AWAITS US!
AH, AYE. M'FAMILY'S BARNY WITH THE WIZARDS O'THE TUATHA DÉ DANANN.
PRETTY PICTURE, EH?
DELIGHTFUL.
DECLAN!
DECLAN DANE. OH, I HOPED I WAS WRONG A MOMENT AGO WHEN I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE BEHIND THIS.
YOU LOOK THE SAME AS I REMEMBER, ANYWAY.
N'YOU LOOK DEAD, AGATHA, ME OL' DARLIN'. STILL, PLEASURE TO SEE YOU TOO.
OH, I DIDN'T SAY IT WAS A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU, DECLAN. AT LEAST NOT UNTIL I KNOW WHY YOU'RE BEHIND THIS.
SO THIS IS ALL YOUR DOING... DECLAN DANE, THE EMERALD WARLOCK.
I'VE LONG HEARD OF YOU--SURPRISED IT'S TAKEN THIS LONG FOR OUR PATHS TO CROSS.
TOOK BOTH OF US BEIN' ON THE WITCHES' ROAD FOR IT TO HAPPEN THO,' EH? FATE, I CALL IT.
THAT IS...IF I HADN'T BEEN AVOIDIN' YE LIKE THE PLAGUE UNTIL I WAS SURE I WAS UP TA THE TASK OF MEETIN' YOU.

SO IT WASN'T FATE, BUT DESIGN.
AYE.
ME KEEPIN' YOU AT ARM'S LENGTH UNTIL I'D AMASSED ENOUGH POWER T'EASILY DEFEAT YOU.
KEPT ME EYE ON YE, THO', N' HOW Y'CAST THA HEX. HA. WHY...
"...I WAS RIGHT UNDER YER NOSE, SO I WAS."
NAME'S SEAN, BUT MOST PEOPLE CALL ME SULLY.
I FEEL... *PAIN*...WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME?
WHY, AIN'T IT OBVIOUS, WANDA MAXIMOFF? WITH YOU *AGING* MINUTE BY MOMENT...
...M'KILLIN' YOU.
WANDA!
N'AGATHA HERE...SHE CAN'T HELP YOU NEITHER, RIGHT, M'GIRL?
GOT HER SPIRIT CONTAINED, SO IT'S JUST YOU 'N ME, SWEETHEART.

LORD, IT BREAKS M'HEART TO SEE YOU AGE SO, BUT THAT'S HOW YOU'RE DESTINED TO GO, SO IT'S THE WAY OF IT.
WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT! WHY...ME? WHY IRELAND?
WELL, YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED BACK IN THE DAY...
...THAT'S ME MAM--THE GREAT DARK WARRIOR SORCERESS ***CARMAN*** BEING DEFEATED BY FOUR MAGES CALLED 'EMSELVES THE ***TUATHA DE DANANN.*** THIS, BACK WHEN WE TRIED TA' CONQUER IRELAND.
"THEY CAPTURED HER AND EXILED ME N'ME BROTHERS ACROSS THE SEA. ***AMERICA*** THAT WAS, THO' IT WEREN'T CALLED THAT BACK THEN.
"MAM DIED OF A BROKEN HEART--COUNTY WEXFORD WHERE THEY HAD HER IMPRISONED.
"ME BROTHERS WERE THE DUB N'DOTHER. I WENT BY DIAN BACK THEN, 'TIL I CHOSE A BETTER NAME FER MESELF.
"I LOVE POWER--HAVIN' IT--ALWAYS HAVE. SO EARLY ON WERE WE IN THE NEW LAND, I KILLED ME BROTHERS N' TOOK WHAT POWERS THEY HAD AS ME'OWN.
"IN THE TIME AWAY, AS I GREW IN POWER, SO THE ***TUATHA DE DANANN*** SPREAD THEIR SEED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."

I WANTED TO MAKE IRELAND PAY, BUT THE WAY THINGS WORKED-- THE SPELL OF BANISHMENT--
YOU COULDN'T RETURN TO IRELAND UNTIL ALL THE *TUATHA DÉ DANANN* BLOODLINES WERE ENDED.
OH, YOU WORKED THAT OUT, EH? WELL, FROM ALL MY OBSERVATIONS, I FIGURED YA FOR A SMART GIRL, SO I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED.
IN A NUTSHELL, I JUST FINISHED OFF THE MAGES' BLOODLINES. LAST ONE--SCARED WEE FELLA FROM AFRICA IT WAS.
BUT HIM DYIN'--THAT GAVE ME IRELAND.
USED THE POWER I HAD TA DRAIN THE PLACE OF ITS ENERGY AND WORTH. MADE IT PAY, SO I DID.
BUT THE COUNTRY HAD NO PART IN YOUR EXILE, IT WAS THE WIZARDS.
IT WAS ALL OF IT!

THERE, NOW. Y'WENT N'MADE ME *ANGRY.*
I DON'T LIKE SHOWING THAT SIDE O'ME.
ALL RIGHT, YOU HATE IRELAND... I GET THAT. SO WHY DIDN'T YOU TRY TO STOP ME IN IRELAND WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE...
...WHEN YOU WERE IN THE GUISE OF SULLY.
AYE, I'VE ASKED MYSELF THE SAME THING. I SUPPOSE IT'S THAT I'M A BIT TAKEN WITH YE, WANDA. YER SO POWERFUL AND YET SO FLAWED N'BROKEN, TOO.
I SUPPOSE I WANTED TO SEE WHAT Y'WERE *CAPABLE* OF.
FINE! SO WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME!
'CUZ YOU'RE GOOD AND I'M BAD. SIMPLE AS SHAKESPEARE.
HA. N' WITH YE DEAD, I'LL CURSE IRELAND *ALL OVER AGAIN.*
OUR POWERS COME WITH A COST--AT LEAST, FOR A *WHITE WITCH* LIKE YOURSELF.
YOUR POWERS 'AVE TAKEN *YEARS* OFF YOUR LIFE.

AGING YER *SOUL*, MORE ACCURATELY. WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR MUST BE A DISQUIETIN' THING, I IMAGINE.
I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT, THANK YOU.
WELL, YOU WON'T HAVE TO--NOT NOW THA' I'M DRAININ' YOU OF YE' POWER.
SOON, M'DEAR, YOU'LL BE AS *DEAD* AS IRELAND...
...AND ***I'LL*** BE ALL THE ***STRONGER.***
YES... ≻COUGH≺ YOU'RE RIGHT...
...THE COST OF USING MY POWERS...MY DESTINY IS TO *DIE YOUNG*...
...BUT NOT TODAY.

YOU CERTAINLY LIKE TO TALK.
WELL, WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT, I AM IRISH.
AY, BUT NEVER MIND THAT! HOW DID YOU DO IT? HOW'RE YA YOUNG AGAIN?
AS I RECALL THE LEGEND OF CARMAN, YOU'RE ACTUALLY *GREEK*, BUT I'LL LET THAT ONE SLIDE.
THE THING IS...AS WE'VE TALKED--OR *YOU* TALKED...WE'VE ALSO BOTH WALKED A GOOD WAY.
OR *RATHER*...I LED YOU.
THERE WAS A FORK IN THE PATH--YOU DIDN'T NOTICE US TAKING IT.
WE WERE IN THE REALM OF *CERNUNNOS*, THE CELTIC DIETY--*MALE*, ONE OF THE FEW WITH ANY TRUE POWER.
BUT LOOK AROUND NOW. THE *THORNS* OF THAT PLACE ARE NO MORE.
I'VE LED YOU TO THE WORLD OF THE *MOTHER GODDESSES--CERRIDWEN, OYA, NICNEVEN*--I COULD GO ON, BUT YOU KNOW THE LIST YOURSELF, I'M SURE.
IT'S HERE THAT I'M *STRONG*. ANY FEMALE WITCH WHO KNOWS HOW TO WALK THE PATHWAYS IS. WHEREAS IN THIS PLACE, MAN--EVEN AN IMMORTAL ONE LIKE YOURSELF--IS *HELPLESS.*
AND IT'S *ME* WHO HAS TAKEN *YOUR* POWER.
IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION, DANE.
NO...

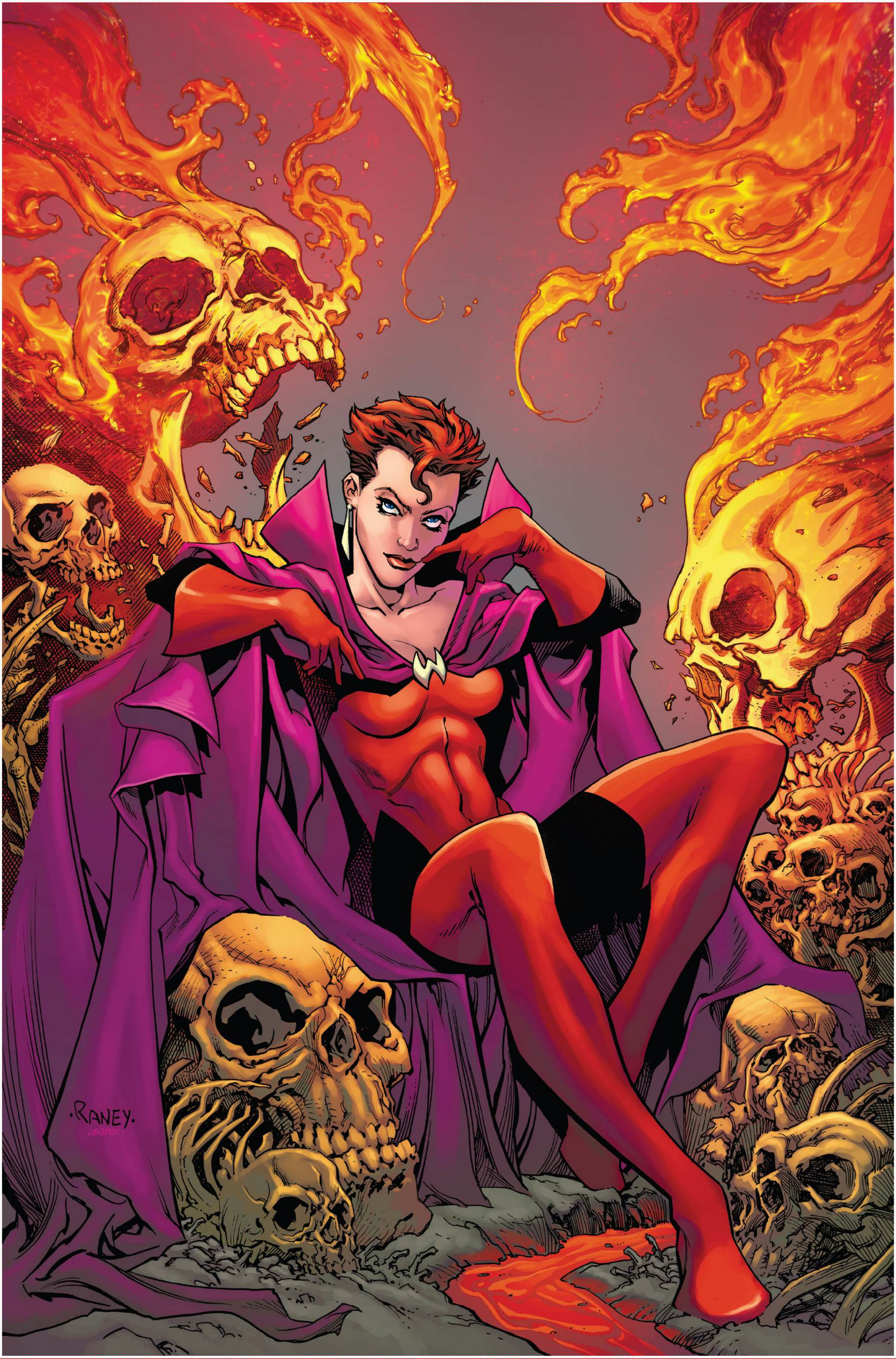
...NO! I WON'T BE DENIED.
I...I...
...I AM THE EMERALD WARLOCK!
KRAKOOM

AND I AM THE Scarlet Witch

NOT A SCRATCH ON YOU, EH. NOT A LINE ON Y'PRETTY FACE.
CLEVER GIRL.
Y'KNOW, ONE THING I DID NOTICE--ALL THESE YEARS YOU'VE BEEN IN THE WORLD N' YA NEVER HAD SOMEONE YE'D CALL *AN ARCHENEMY.*
WELL, YOU DO NOW.

"SO YOU JUST LET DANE ESCAPE."
"WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAD A WHOLE LOT OF CONTROL OVER THE MATTER."
BLIN
WOMEN'S REALM OR NOT, HE'S STILL THE "EMERALD WARLOCK"...AS HE LIKES TO YELL AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS, APPARENTLY.
EVEN DEFEATED IN THE GODDESS REALM, HE RETAINED SOME POWER.
WHEN WE DO FINALLY HAVE SOME KIND OF TRUE MAGICAL BATTLE OR ARCH-ENCOUNTER...AS WE INEVITABLY WILL... THERE'S NO FOREGONE CONCLUSION AS TO WHO'LL BE THE VICTOR.
THE ONE THING I DO KNOW...
WE TALKED ABOUT THE MYTHS OF IRELAND AND HOW SO MANY OF THEM ARE REAL.
YES.
BANSHEES.
FEMALE SPIRITS AKIN TO FAIRIES, BUT FAR DARKER. THEIR SCREAMS FORETELL DEATH.
THEY'RE SAID TO SOMETIMES TAKE THE FORM OF HARES, STOATS... AND HOODED CROWS.
LOOK.

I CANNOT HEAR ITS SCREAM...
...BUT I FEEL THAT DEATH DRAWS CLOSE.



1 Marvel '92 variant by **Tom Raney** & **Chris Sotomayor**

Scarlet Witch

EXVRGE DOMINE ET JVDICA CAVSAM TVAM · PSALM 73

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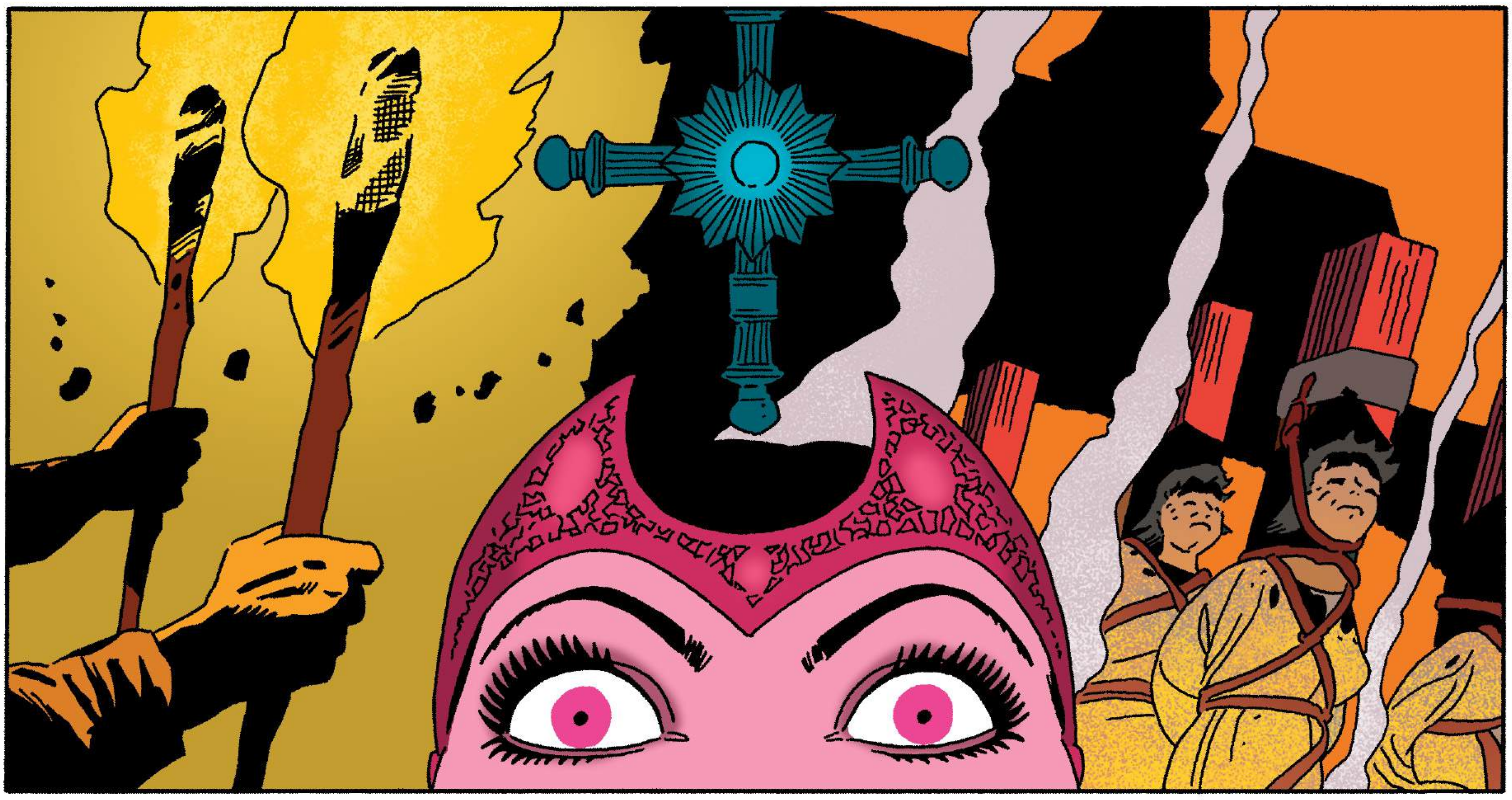


SCARLET WITCH'S

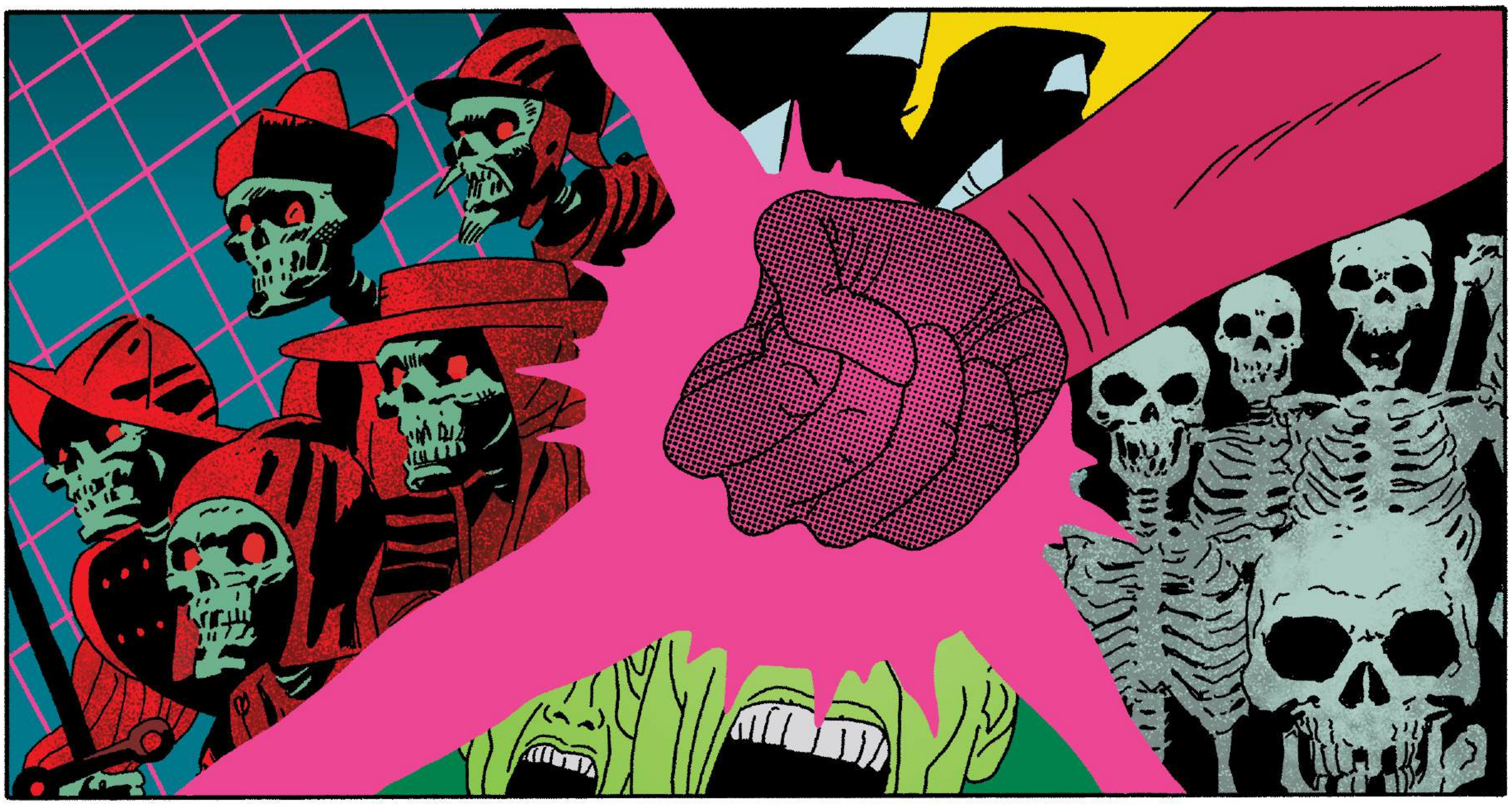
SHHHH

A WHISPER

A COMIC-CODEX BY JAVIER PULIDO
FROM A SCRIPT BY JAMES ROBINSON

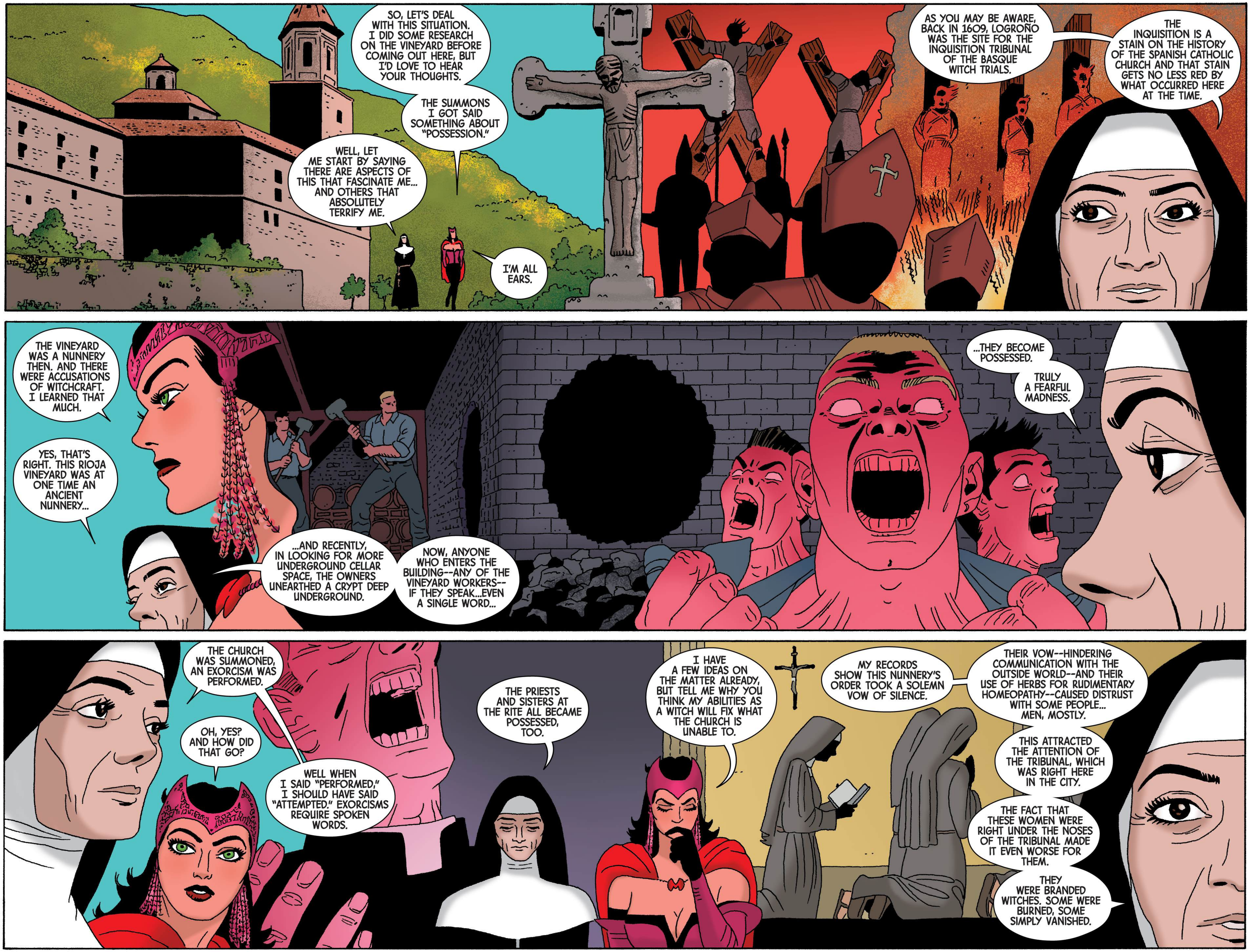
WITH MUNTSA VICENTE ON COLORS

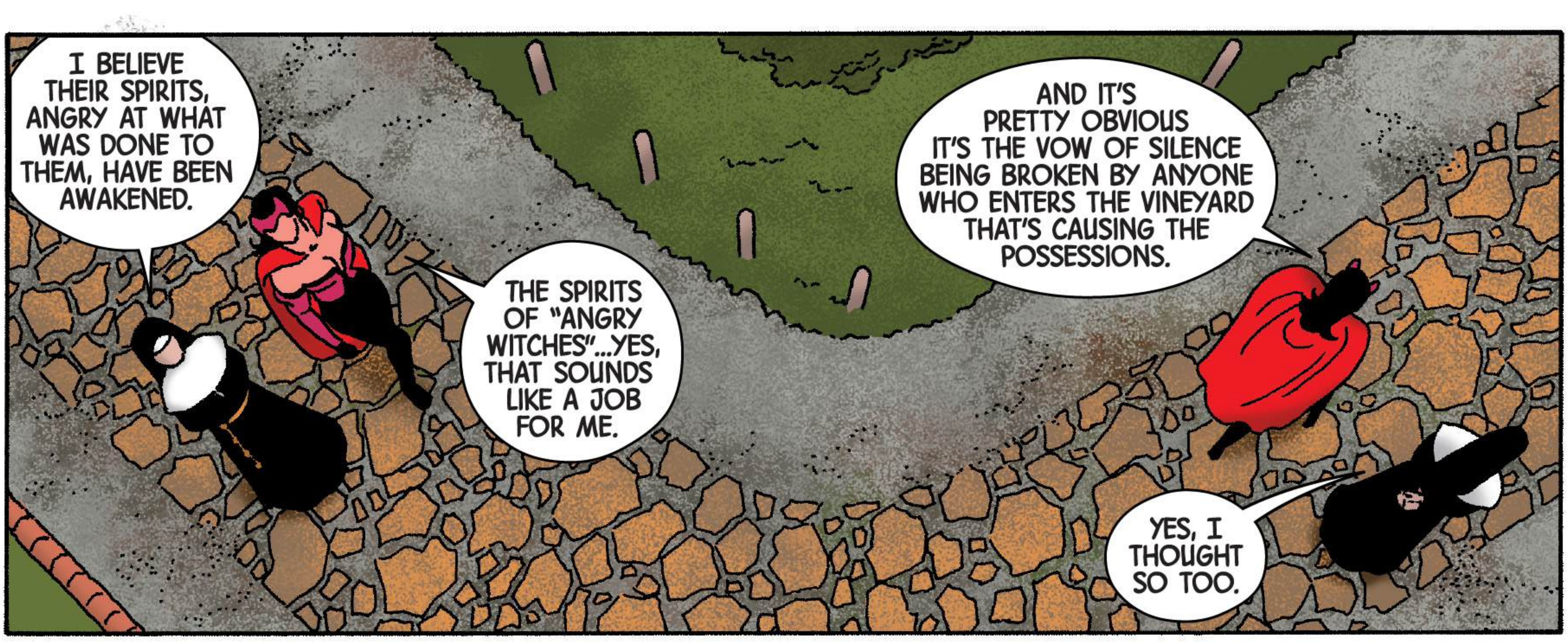
AND CORY PETIT ON LETTERS
EDITED BY EMILY SHAW

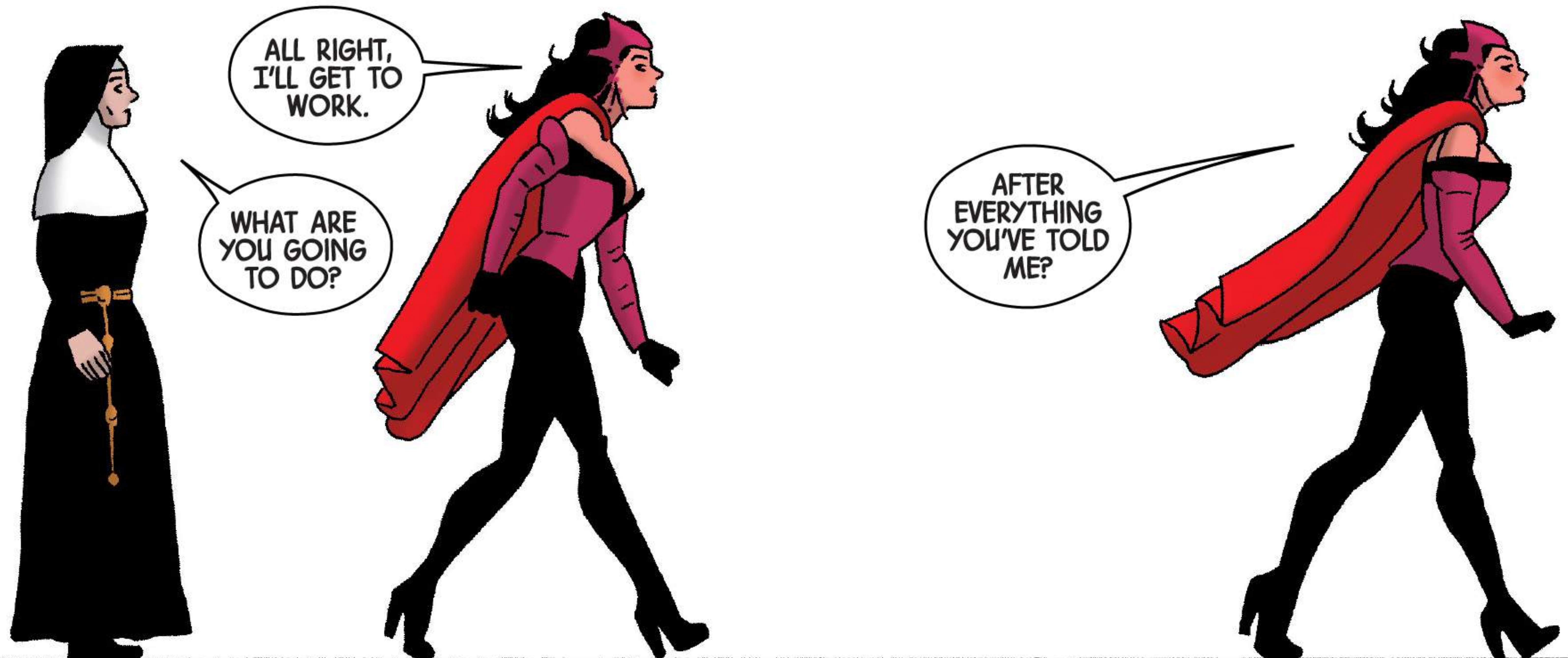


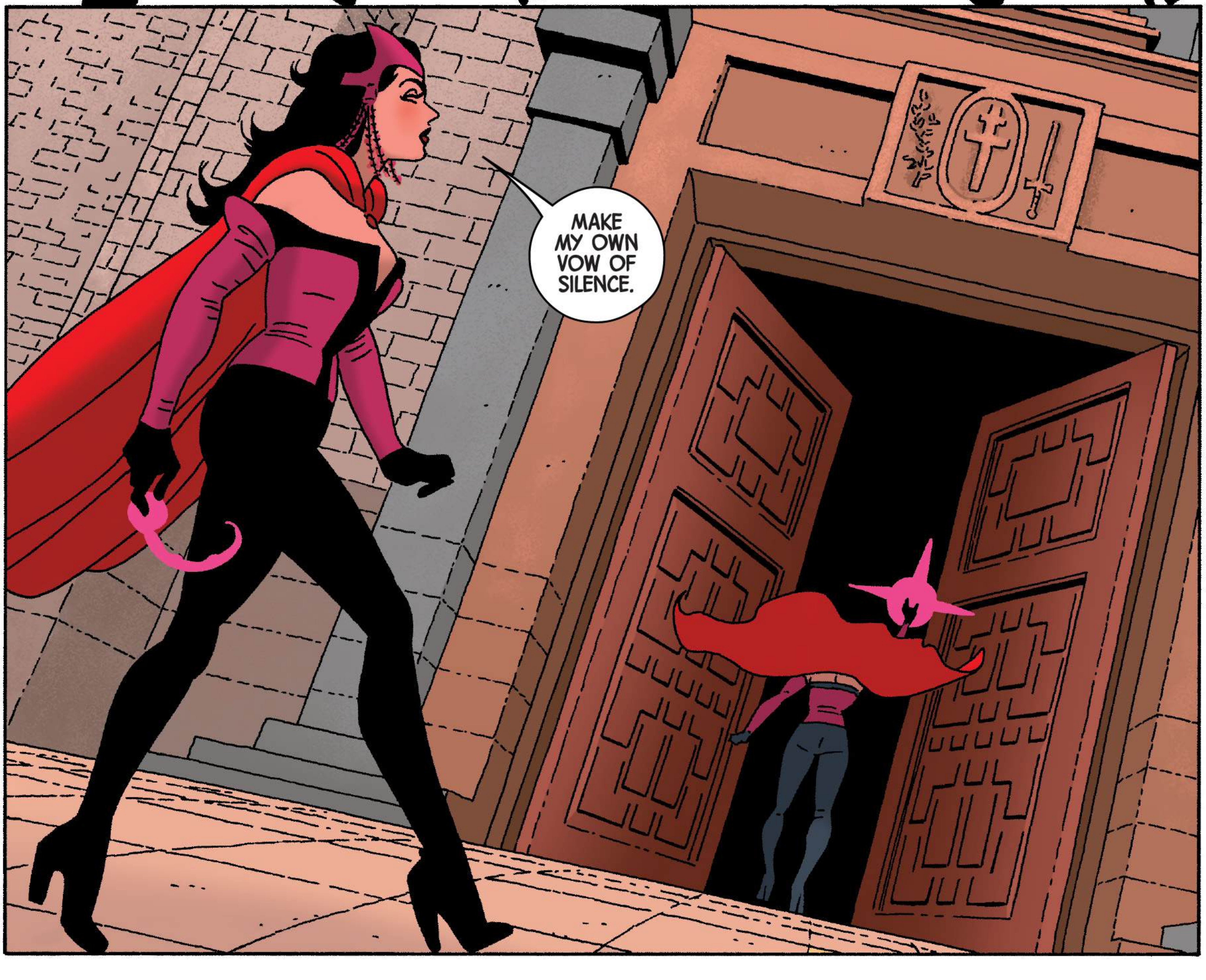
LOGROÑO, SPAIN.
LA MIEL MADURA VINEYARD, DUE NORTH OF THE CITY.
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT OFFENDED, MS. MAXIMOFF...
...WHEN I SAY HOW UNSETTLING IT IS TO ASK FOR HELP FROM A PAGAN.
NOT AT ALL, FATHER GABALDON, I'M USED TO INSULTS.
OH DEAR, I DIDN'T MEAN--IT'S JUST--WELL... YOU ARE A WITCH.
AND IT SEEMS THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT, AFTER ALL...MEN OF GOD AND WITCHES. SORGINAKS AS THE BASQUES CALLED US--YOUR DISTRUST AND HATRED OF MY KIND.
YES, MS. MAXIMOFF, YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

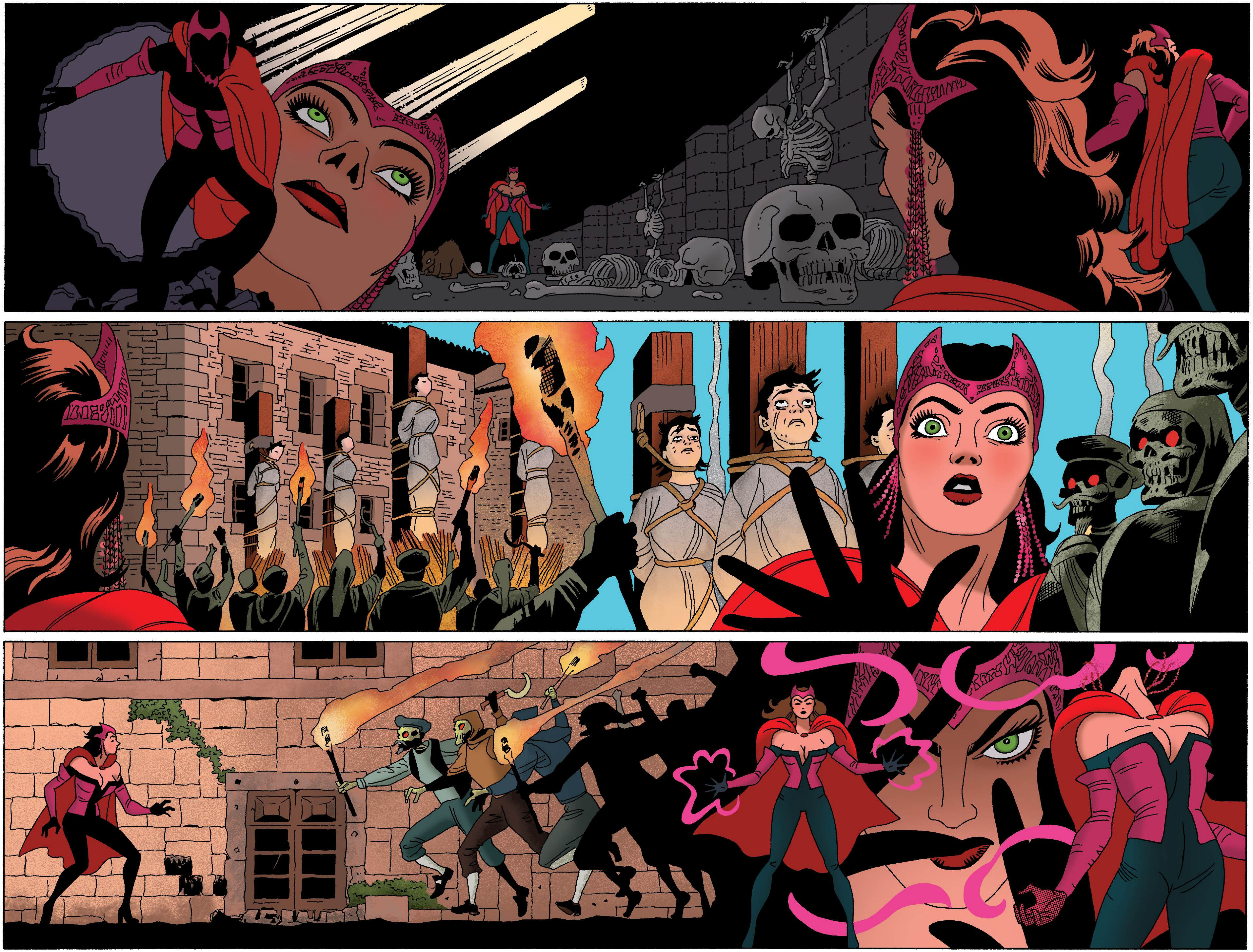
SORGINAKS AND THEIR CRAFT WERE FEARED AND PERSECUTED BACK DURING THE INQUISITION AND IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE PAYING FOR THAT HERE TODAY.
I'M SISTER LORENZ. I WAS SENT HERE TO LIAISE WITH YOU DUE TO MY STUDIES INTO THE HISTORY OF THIS REGION.
CALL ME WANDA.
I'LL HANDLE THINGS FROM HERE, FATHER.
BUT-- I-- THIS WAS MY--
THANK YOU, FATHER, YOU MAY GO.
I'M SORRY IF MY BEING A WITCH UPSETS HIM.
YOU'RE A WOMAN, WANDA, AND YOU HAVE POWER IN THE WORLD. YOU'RE KNOWN.
THAT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH TO UPSET A MAN LIKE FATHER GABALDON, EVEN BEFORE YOU START CASTING SPELLS.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, SISTER...MY BEING A WITCH DOESN'T BOTHER YOU?
OH, I'M VERY MUCH A BRIDE OF CHRIST, BUT LIKE MY SAVIOR, I KEEP AN OPEN MIND ON ALL THINGS.

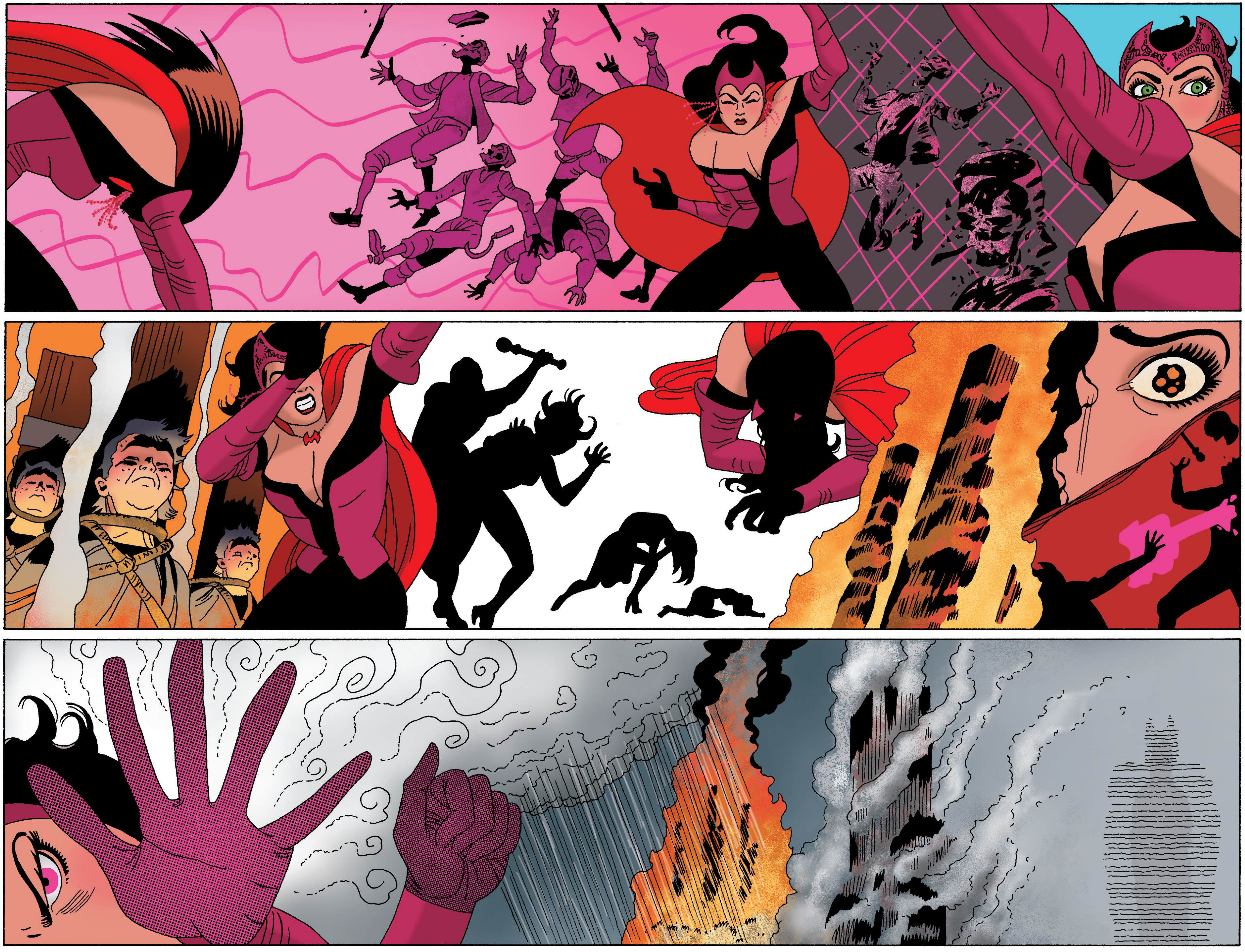

SO, LET'S DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION. I DID SOME RESEARCH ON THE VINEYARD BEFORE COMING OUT HERE, BUT I'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS.
THE SUMMONS I GOT SAID SOMETHING ABOUT "POSSESSION."
WELL, LET ME START BY SAYING THERE ARE ASPECTS OF THIS THAT FASCINATE ME... AND OTHERS THAT ABSOLUTELY TERRIFY ME.
I'M ALL EARS.
AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, BACK IN 1609, LOGROÑO WAS THE SITE FOR THE INQUISITION TRIBUNAL OF THE BASQUE WITCH TRIALS.
THE INQUISITION IS A STAIN ON THE HISTORY OF THE SPANISH CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THAT STAIN GETS NO LESS RED BY WHAT OCCURRED HERE AT THE TIME.
THE VINEYARD WAS A NUNNERY THEN. AND THERE WERE ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT. I LEARNED THAT MUCH.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT. THIS RIOJA VINEYARD WAS AT ONE TIME AN ANCIENT NUNNERY...
...AND RECENTLY, IN LOOKING FOR MORE UNDERGROUND CELLAR SPACE, THE OWNERS UNEARTHED A CRYPT DEEP UNDERGROUND.
NOW, ANYONE WHO ENTERS THE BUILDING--ANY OF THE VINEYARD WORKERS--IF THEY SPEAK...EVEN A SINGLE WORD...
...THEY BECOME POSSESSED.
TRULY A FEARFUL MADNESS.
THE CHURCH WAS SUMMONED, AN EXORCISM WAS PERFORMED.
OH, YES? AND HOW DID THAT GO?
WELL WHEN I SAID "PERFORMED," I SHOULD HAVE SAID "ATTEMPTED." EXORCISMS REQUIRE SPOKEN WORDS.
THE PRIESTS AND SISTERS AT THE RITE ALL BECAME POSSESSED, TOO.
I HAVE A FEW IDEAS ON THE MATTER ALREADY, BUT TELL ME WHY YOU THINK MY ABILITIES AS A WITCH WILL FIX WHAT THE CHURCH IS UNABLE TO.
MY RECORDS SHOW THIS NUNNERY'S ORDER TOOK A SOLEMN VOW OF SILENCE.
THEIR VOW--HINDERING COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD--AND THEIR USE OF HERBS FOR RUDIMENTARY HOMEOPATHY--CAUSED DISTRUST WITH SOME PEOPLE... MEN, MOSTLY.
THIS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE TRIBUNAL, WHICH WAS RIGHT HERE IN THE CITY.
THE FACT THAT THESE WOMEN WERE RIGHT UNDER THE NOSES OF THE TRIBUNAL MADE IT EVEN WORSE FOR THEM.
THEY WERE BRANDED WITCHES. SOME WERE BURNED, SOME SIMPLY VANISHED.

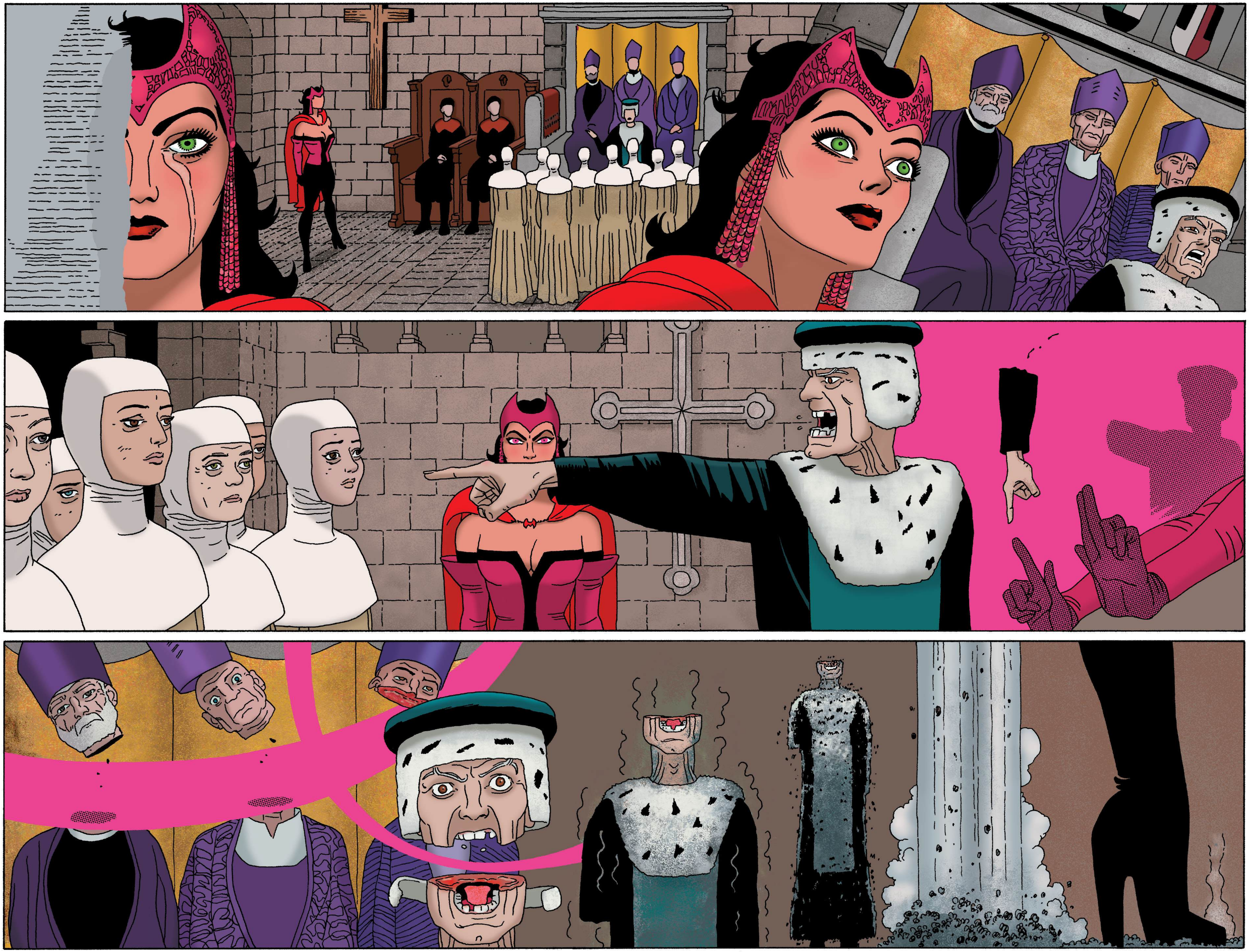

I BELIEVE THEIR SPIRITS, ANGRY AT WHAT WAS DONE TO THEM, HAVE BEEN AWAKENED.
THE SPIRITS OF "ANGRY WITCHES"...YES, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A JOB FOR ME.
AND IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS IT'S THE VOW OF SILENCE BEING BROKEN BY ANYONE WHO ENTERS THE VINEYARD THAT'S CAUSING THE POSSESSIONS.
YES, I THOUGHT SO TOO.

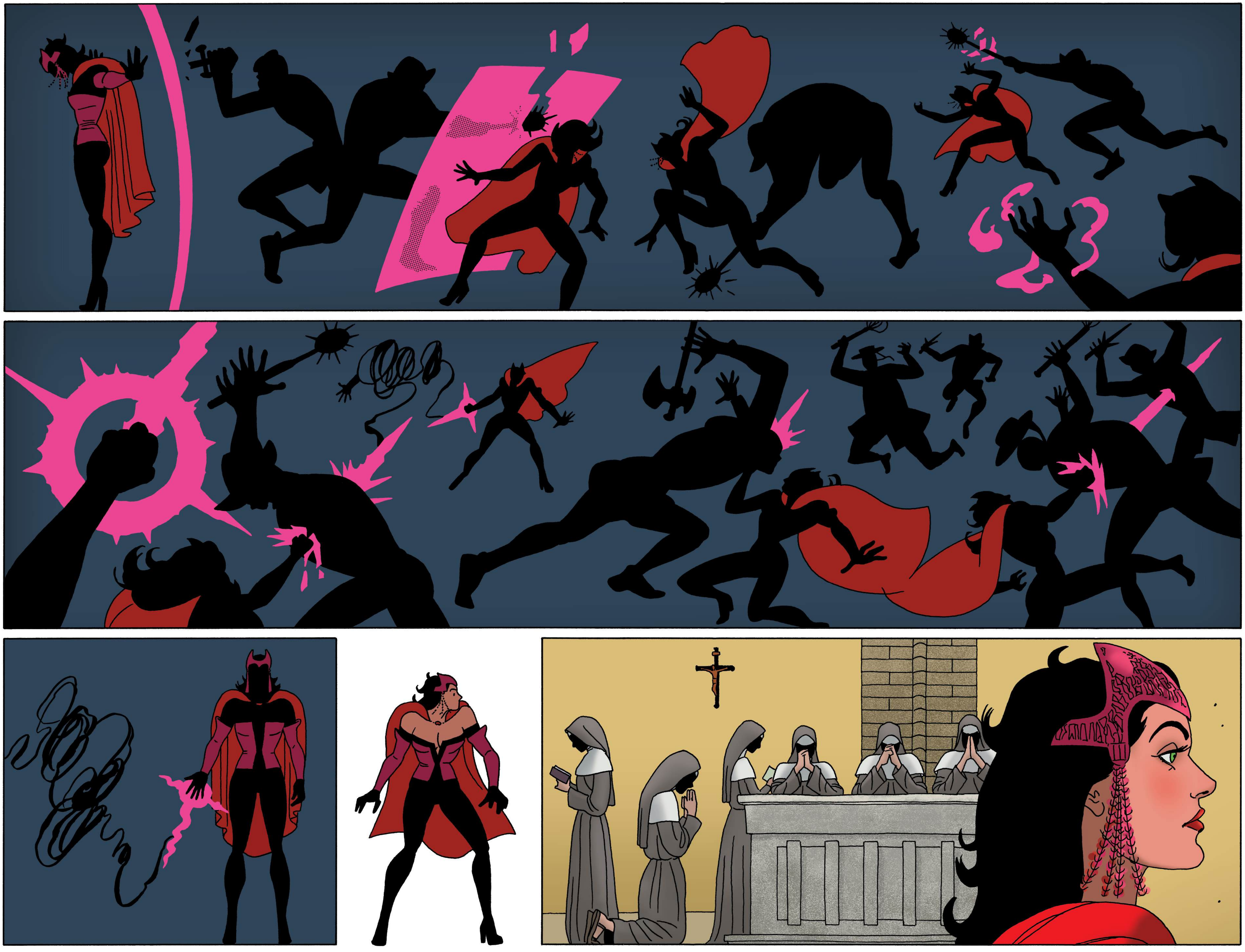

ALL RIGHT, I'LL GET TO WORK.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
AFTER EVERYTHING YOU'VE TOLD ME?

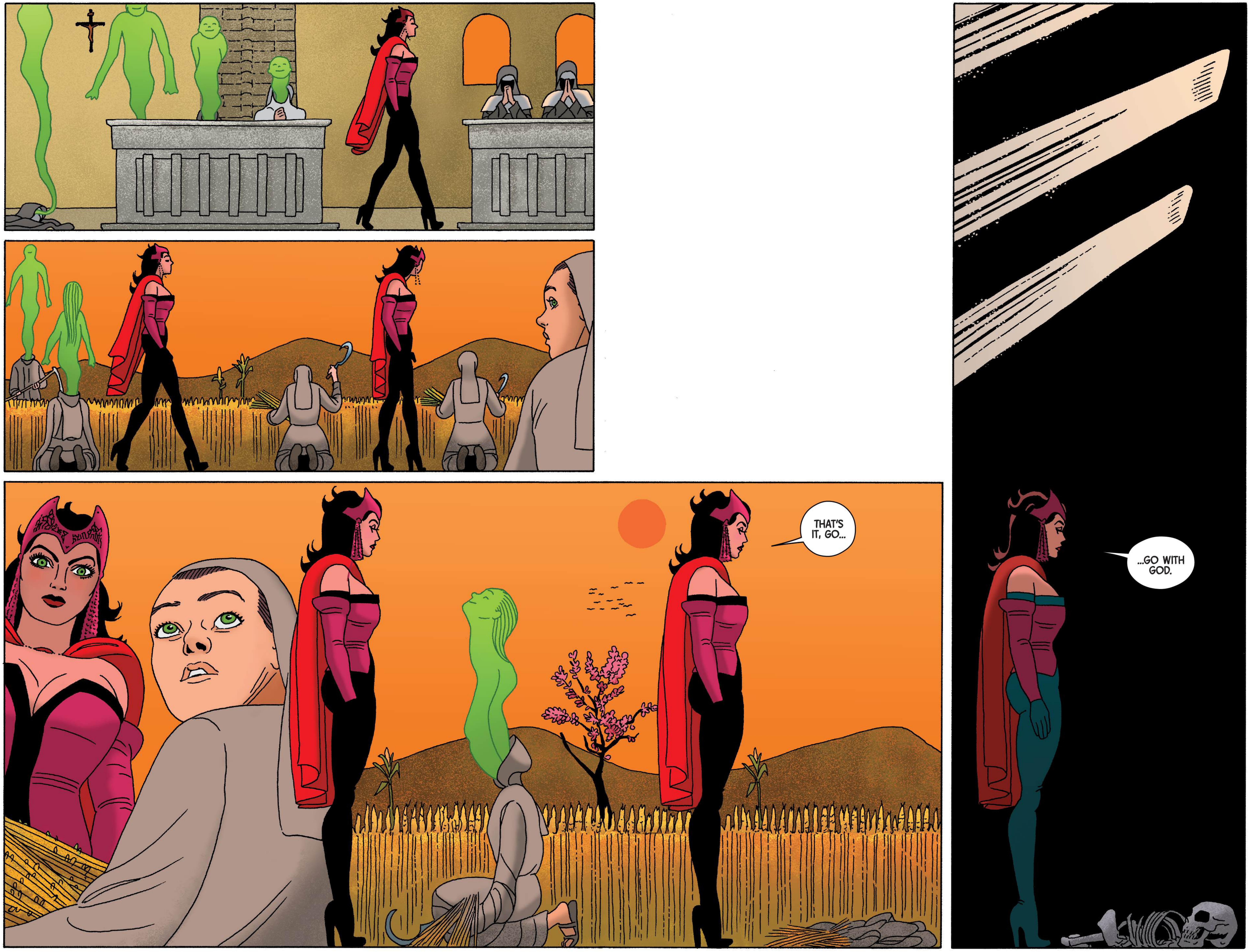

MAKE MY OWN VOW OF SILENCE.

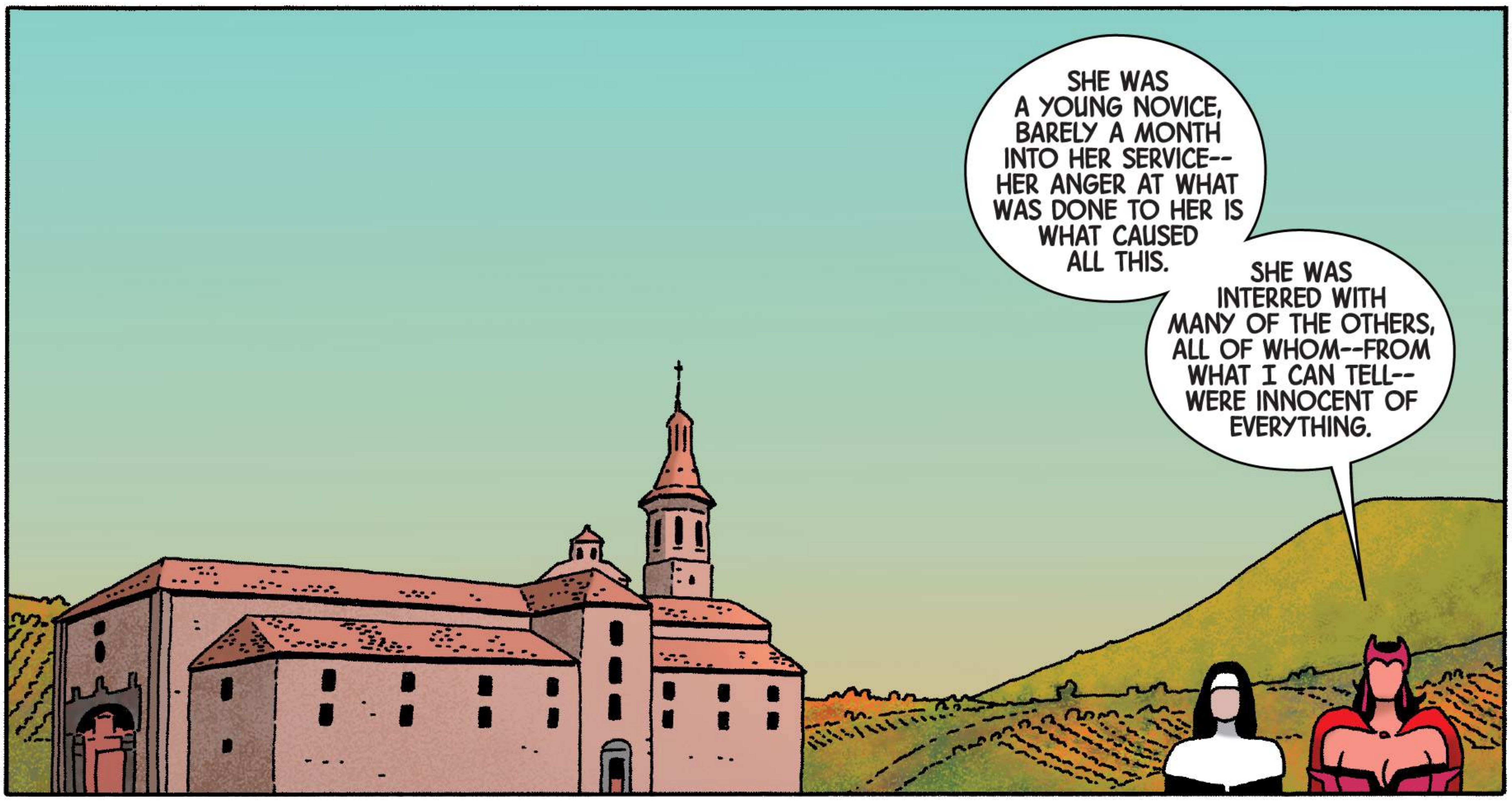


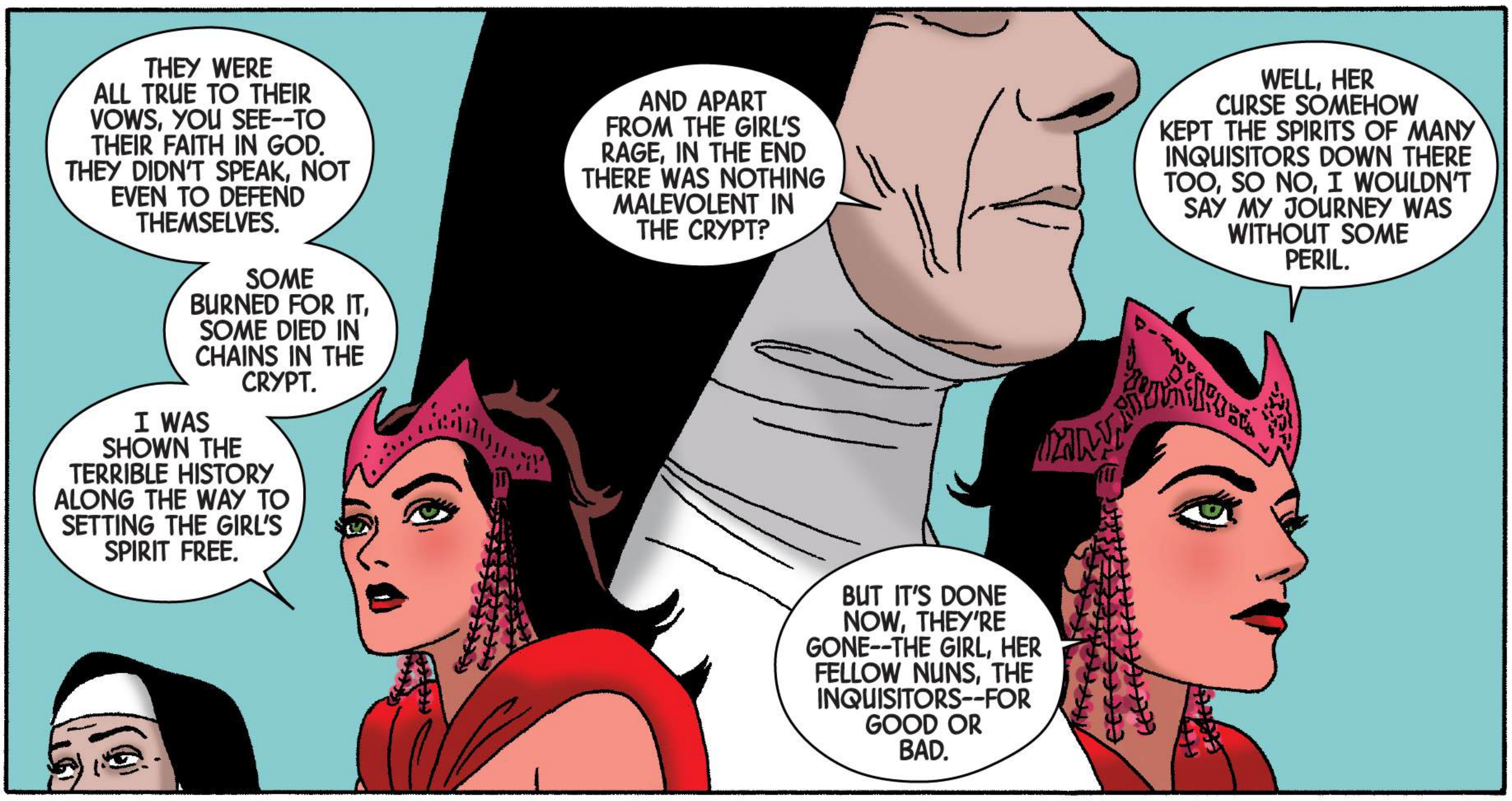


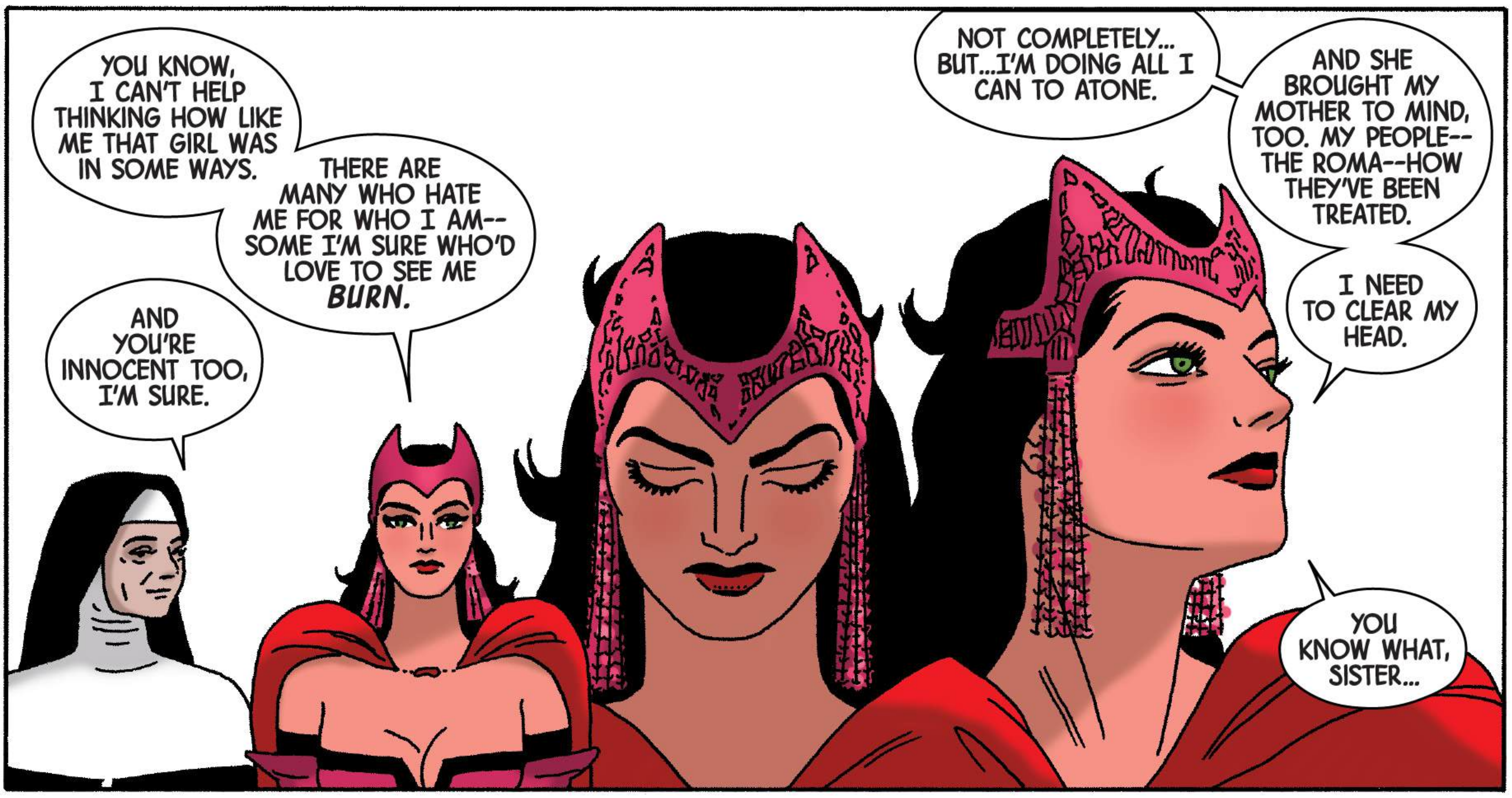





THAT'S IT, GO...
...GO WITH GOD.


SHE WAS A YOUNG NOVICE, BARELY A MONTH INTO HER SERVICE-- HER ANGER AT WHAT WAS DONE TO HER IS WHAT CAUSED ALL THIS.
SHE WAS INTERRED WITH MANY OF THE OTHERS, ALL OF WHOM--FROM WHAT I CAN TELL-- WERE INNOCENT OF EVERYTHING.


THEY WERE ALL TRUE TO THEIR VOWS, YOU SEE--TO THEIR FAITH IN GOD. THEY DIDN'T SPEAK, NOT EVEN TO DEFEND THEMSELVES.
SOME BURNED FOR IT, SOME DIED IN CHAINS IN THE CRYPT.
I WAS SHOWN THE TERRIBLE HISTORY ALONG THE WAY TO SETTING THE GIRL'S SPIRIT FREE.
AND APART FROM THE GIRL'S RAGE, IN THE END THERE WAS NOTHING MALEVOLENT IN THE CRYPT?
WELL, HER CURSE SOMEHOW KEPT THE SPIRITS OF MANY INQUISITORS DOWN THERE TOO, SO NO, I WOULDN'T SAY MY JOURNEY WAS WITHOUT SOME PERIL.
BUT IT'S DONE NOW, THEY'RE GONE--THE GIRL, HER FELLOW NUNS, THE INQUISITORS--FOR GOOD OR BAD.


YOU KNOW, I CAN'T HELP THINKING HOW LIKE ME THAT GIRL WAS IN SOME WAYS.
THERE ARE MANY WHO HATE ME FOR WHO I AM-- SOME I'M SURE WHO'D LOVE TO SEE ME *BURN.*
AND YOU'RE INNOCENT TOO, I'M SURE.
NOT COMPLETELY... BUT...I'M DOING ALL I CAN TO ATONE.
AND SHE BROUGHT MY MOTHER TO MIND, TOO. MY PEOPLE-- THE ROMA--HOW THEY'VE BEEN TREATED.
I NEED TO CLEAR MY HEAD.
YOU KNOW WHAT, SISTER...

...IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I'VE TAKEN A WALK THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE.
JM

2 variant by **Kris Anka**

Scarlet
Witch
AJA
6

PARIS IS A CITY OF MANY GHOSTS...
...AND ALL I NEED IS ONE OF THEM.

SO WHY AM I SO NERVOUS? MY LIPS ARE DRY. MY HANDS SHAKE EVEN AS I CAST THIS DRAWING HEX.
I SUPPOSE IT'S WHAT'S AT STAKE...
...A MAN'S HEART.
HIS *SOUL.*
AND THE HOPE THAT HIS WINGS MAY ONCE AGAIN TAKE FLIGHT.

PARIS. THREE HOURS EARLIER.
THE TERM "APACHE" WAS COINED AROUND 1900 FOR CERTAIN PARISIAN STREET GANGS.
GANGS RENOWNED FOR THEIR SAVAGERY...
...THEIR NAME TAKEN FROM THE MIGHTY WARRIORS OF THE AMERICAN PLAINS...
LES APACHES NOUVEAUX.
THEY WERE ALSO APPARENTLY QUITE GOOD DANCERS.
NO IDEA ABOUT THE FOOTWORK OF THIS NEW CABAL WHO TAKE THEIR NAME FROM THIS CITY'S PAST.
I NEED TO SHOW THEM IT TAKES MORE THAN SOME HI-TECH TOYS AND A DISREGARD FOR THE LAW TO MAKE THEM EVEN A FOOTNOTE IN HISTORY.
ضعيف
IT ISN'T HARD.
A HEKA SPELL OF DEPOWERING FROM ANCIENT EGYPT...
...COUPLED WITH A TRIBAL HAND SIGN SPELL FROM THE AMERICAN PLAINS INDIANS TO INDUCE SLEEP.
THERE.
OR I SUPPOSE I SHOULD SAY...
C'EST FINI.

YOU HAVE YOUR OWN HEROES, I KNOW, *INSPECTOR JOUBERT.*
THANK YOU, MADEMOISELLE. I MUST SAY WE ARE NOT USED TO SOMEONE OF YOUR STATURE HELPING US WITH OUR PROBLEMS.
PLEASE, CALL ME MARC.
DE FRAN
Opéra
POLICE
POLICE
MARC. I WAS HERE ON A MISSION OF MY OWN--ADVICE FROM ONE OF MY COLLEAGUES--
AN AVENGER?
NO, A WITCH. NOTHING TO DO WITH *LES APACHES NOUVEAUX,* THOUGH. NO, I WAS MERELY PASSING BY.
AS YOU SAY, THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME.
OR THE WRONG PLACE AND WRONG TIME IF YOU WERE A MEMBER OF THAT GANG, I SUPPOSE.
ACTUALLY THE CITY IS LIGHT ON THE SUPER HERO FRONT AT THE MOMENT--
LES HEROS DE PARIS HAVE VANISHED--WHERE? WHO KNOWS? OUR ELITE ARMORED GOVERNMENT UNIT, THE *MUSKETEERS,* IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY, THE VIGILANTE SWORDSWOMAN *LA GUILLOTINE*...I KNOW FOR A FACT IS IN MARSEILLE CAUSING MAYHEM...
...AND AS FOR OUR MOST WELL-KNOWN HERO INTERNATIONALLY--
POLICE
POLICE
LET ME GUESS. LE PEREGRINE, RIGHT? THE ONE WHO FLIES?
THAT ISN'T GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT, NOT IN FRANCE--HERE HE'S CALLED LE FAUCON PÈLERIN--
--AND I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT CURRENTLY...

"...HE DOESN'T FLY AT ALL."
ALAIN? ALAIN RACINE?
OH. HELLO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
OF COURSE, EVERYONE KNOWS YOU. YOU'RE LA SORCIÈRE ÉCARLATE--THE *SCARLET WITCH.*
HMM. I'M STILL GETTING USED TO BEING RECOGNIZED. I HAD NO IDEA I WAS KNOWN HERE.
REGARDLESS, HOW CAN I HELP YOU? I'M BUSY AT THE MOMENT.
WELL, IF I MIGHT BEG TO DIFFER ON THAT STATEMENT...
...I HOPE IT'S *I* WHO CAN HELP *YOU.* AND TRUTHFULLY... YOU'VE BEEN FAR FROM BUSY, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
I CANNOT FLY, YOU SEE.

I HAVE NOT TAKEN TO THE SKY SINCE...
WITHOUT FLIGHT WHAT AM I? A MAN--NO MORE OR LESS THAN ANYONE.
NO, *LESS.* I AM *NOTHING.*
TELL ME--WHAT HAPPENED TO MAKE YOU THIS WAY?
WHY DO YOU CARE?
BECAUSE I'M A HUMAN BEING.
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME--WHO I AM AND WHAT MY POWERS ARE?
I KNOW YOU'RE AN AERIAL HERO. YOUR WINGS GIVE YOU THE POWER OF FLIGHT, MUCH LIKE OUR CURRENT CAPTAIN AMERICA--
SAM WILSON, WHO USED TO BE THE FALCON, YES? I SUPPOSE WE ARE ALIKE.
THE WAY WE DIFFER IS THAT MY WINGS ARE LINKED TO MY *BRAIN*--SPECIFICALLY--MY MIND AND MY THOUGHTS.
IT'S NOT AS IF I CAN SIMPLY TAKE THEM OFF AND HAND THEM TO SOMEONE ELSE, IF I EVER RETIRED.
MY ORIGIN IS A STRANGE ONE--I'M A *WRITER* BY PROFESSION, I WAS SEEKING RESEARCH. I WENT LOOKING FOR ONE THING, AND FOUND SOMETHING ELSE *ENTIRELY*... THESE WINGS. OR THEY FOUND ME, PERHAPS.
I CHOSE TO USE THEM FOR *GOOD.*
AND FROM WHAT I KNOW, YOU'VE QUITE THE SKILL AS AN *INVESTIGATOR*--ONE MAN, YOU, WITH FLIGHT AS YOUR ONLY POWER, HAVE SAVED YOUR COUNTRY ON COUNTLESS OCCASIONS.
YOU'RE CONSIDERED FRANCE'S *GREATEST HERO.*
YES, I'M THE BEST WE COULD DO. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO BE PROUD OR ASHAMED.
STILL, I SUPPOSE I'VE DONE ALL RIGHT. I'M PRETTY SURE I'VE SAVED PARIS FROM TOTAL DESTRUCTION AT LEAST ONCE.
AND YET... WHEN...WHEN SHE NEEDED ME.
I COULDN'T SAVE *ADELE.*
ADELE?
MY WIFE.
MY BEAUTIFUL WIFE.
I MET HER--I SAW HER--

"--THE FIRST TIME I SAW HER, SHE WAS ON THE RUNWAY...PARIS FASHION WEEK. SHE WAS A MODEL, LOVELY. MY HEART WAS HERS FROM THAT FIRST MOMENT.
"AND SHE LOVED ME. SHE TOLD ME SHE TOO WAS MINE FROM THE MOMENT OUR EYES MET."
YOU WERE THERE AS *LE PEREGRINE?*
THAT'S THE THING, IT WASN'T WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK--HER A MODEL AND ME A CELEBRITY SUPER HERO. NO COSTUME OR WINGS TO IMPRESS HER.
"I WAS JUST ALAIN RACINE, WRITING A PIECE ON WHAT IT'S LIKE BACKSTAGE AT A SHOW.
"THERE WERE SO MANY GIRLS BACK THERE, SO MUCH BEAUTY, AND IT ALL FADED TO NOTHING WHEN SHE FIRST CAME INTO VIEW.
"BUT THAT WASN'T THE THING ABOUT HER--HER BEAUTY, NO--IT WAS HER GREATER BEAUTY WITHIN. HOW MUCH SHE CARED ABOUT POLITICS AND THE WORLD.
"SHE LOVED BOOKS. READING, SHE WAS ALWAYS READING. WE WERE ALWAYS ARGUING, TOO--NOTHING SERIOUS, BUT SHE SAW THE MERITS IN THE WORKS OF MANY WRITERS AND ME BEING A JEALOUS WRITER MYSELF RARELY SAW THE GOOD IN ANY OF THEM.
"WE NEVER WENT TO BED ANGRY, THOUGH.
I LOVED HER SO MUCH.
WHAT HAPPENED, ALAIN? HOW DID YOUR WIFE DIE?
IT HAPPENED THE DAY AFTER THE ATTACKS HERE IN THE CITY.
THERE WAS SO MUCH FEAR, SO MUCH CONFUSION. I WAS EVERYWHERE, TRYING TO BE. THE HUNT WAS ON FOR THE REST OF THE PERPETRATORS, I'M SURE YOU KNOW. IT WAS ON THE NEWS EVERYWHERE.

"ADELE WAS DRIVING OUT OF THE SUBURBS TO CHECK ON A FRIEND. A POSTAL VAN COLLIDED WITH HER CAR...
"...AND I LOST HER."
I'M SORRY... REALLY I AM. BUT I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND...HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOUR FLYING?
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE. I KNOW IT'S RIDICULOUS TO THINK THIS WAY--REALLY, I DO, BUT--
I WAS SO BUSY ELSEWHERE--EVERYWHERE--INSTEAD OF BEING WITH HER. WHY WASN'T I DRIVING? WHY WASN'T I FLYING BY TO SWOOP DOWN AND SAVE HER?
WHEN I'VE SAVED SO MANY, WHY COULDN'T I HAVE BEEN THERE FOR HER?
SO, I COME UP HERE. THIS ROOF. THAT ROOF. ALL OVER. AND I STAND AND I MOURN AND I TRY TO TAKE TO THE AIR...
...BUT MY MIND WON'T LET ME. MY WINGS WON'T WORK.
I FEEL IMPOTENT.
HONESTLY, IT'S CROSSED MY MIND MORE THAN ONCE TO JUST TAKE A STEP OVER THE SIDE AND VISIT THE PAVEMENT...
...IF THERE'S AN AFTERLIFE, I'LL SEE MY SWEET ADELE, AND IF THERE ISN'T, AT LEAST I'LL BE FREE OF THIS TORMENT.
IF I COULD ONLY SEE HER AGAIN...SO I COULD TELL HER HOW SAD AND SORRY I AM THAT SHE'S GONE AND THAT I COULDN'T BE THERE WHEN SHE NEEDED ME.
DO YOU THINK THAT WOULD HEAL YOU?
HONESTLY... I HAVE NO IDEA.

LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
SO LIKE I SAY...
...PARIS HAS IT'S MANY GHOSTS.
...I CAN ONLY HOPE MINE DECIDES TO SHOW HERSELF.
I USE A SPELL OF SUMMONING--
YOU WHO LIVED YESTERDAY...
...I'LL CALL YOU FROM MY MIND TO YOURS!
COME BACK FROM SHADOWS INTO THE LIGHT...
...AND SHOW YOURSELF HERE.

ADELE!
ALAIN...
ADELE, MY LOVE, I CAN'T BELIEVE--I HOPED, BUT--
ALAIN, YOU DON'T HAVE LONG...
...MY POWER IS ONLY STRONG ENOUGH SO THAT SHE WILL REMAIN FOR A MOMENT OR TWO.
LISTEN TO ME, ALAIN...

...YOU CAN'T BECOME THIS--A LOST MAN MOURNING ME. YOU MUST GO ON.
WITHOUT YOU, WHAT'S THE POINT?
IN FACT, KNOWING YOU'RE HERE--A SPIRIT--THAT THERE IS AN EXISTENCE BEYOND THIS ONE...
...IT SHOWS ME THE WAY--
NO!
NO!
ALAIN!!!
YOU IDIOT!

'CHAVAIA!
OPRE!
DO YOU THINK I DID THIS AS AN INVITATION FOR YOU TO *END YOUR LIFE?*
HAVE YOU *ANY* IDEA HOW MUCH A SPELL LIKE THIS--SUMMONING YOUR WIFE'S SPIRIT BACK FROM THE AFTERLIFE--HAS COST ME?
EVERY HEX TAKES TIME OFF MY LIFE. THIS... IS MY LIFE-SPAN. NICE, "OUI?"
ALAIN, THIS ISN'T THE WAY...
...NOT TO HAPPINESS AND NOT TO MY HEART!
I'M SORRY, WANDA. THAT WAS...UNGRATEFUL OF ME.
IT'S JUST THAT I MISS YOU SO MUCH, ADELE. LIFE WITHOUT YOU IS MEANINGLESS.

WHAT WAS IT THAT WANDA JUST CALLED YOU? *"IDIOT?!"* SHE'S RIGHT, YOU'RE A FOOL!
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE. THERE'S AN EXPRESSION... *"VOUS ETES UN MORT DEPUIS LONGTEMPS DE TEMPS."* I WILL STILL BE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO CROSS OVER.
BUT UNTIL THEN YOU HAVE A DESTINY...YOU HAVE TO SAVE--
FRANCE? PROTECT AND SAVE?! TO HELL WITH FRANCE--TO HELL WITH EVERYONE. I WANT YOU, ADELE.
THE MAN I LOVE WOULD NEVER SPEAK THAT WAY-- THE MAN I WILL ONE DAY HOLD IN MY ARMS AGAIN.
NANTI JAL AVREE NANTI JAL AVREE NANTI JAL AVREE
I'M SORRY, MY LOVE.
AND YOU, WANDA, I'M SORRY. AS ADELE SAYS, I'M NOT MYSELF.
WELL, YOU ARE YOURSELF WHEN IT COMES TO ***INTERRUPTING*** ME WHEN I'M SAYING SOMETHING...IN THAT REGARD YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY...IS THAT YOU MUST ***SAVE THE WORLD.***
HEROES' VALUES WAXES AND WANES, BUT FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT, YOU WILL BE EARTH'S GREATEST CHAMPION...
...YOU WILL ENCOUNTER A GRAVE THREAT TO THIS PLANET...AND YOU WILL ***SAVE EVERYONE.***
WHEN?
FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF. I CAN'T DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU.]

YOU MINX.
YOU PIG.
I ADORE YOU.
AND I YOU.
WE'LL BE TOGETHER ONE DAY, I SWEAR, BUT UNTIL THEN--AS BOTH ALAIN RACINE AND LE FAUCON PÈLERIN...
...LIVE FOR BOTH OF US.

THANK YOU, WANDA. THIS MOMENT--SEEING MY BELOVED WIFE HAS GIVEN ME MORE THAN I'D DARED HOPE.
FUNNY... HOW MERE MOMENTS AGO YOU STOPPED ME FROM TAKING MY LIFE.
I HONESTLY FEEL I'M BORN AGAIN.
I WILL ALWAYS BE IN YOUR DEBT.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN EVER DO... ANYTHING--
HUSH.
REPAY ME BY DOING AS YOUR WIFE BADE YOU.
LIVE...

"...AND FLY."

scarlet
WITCH
cho

3 variant by **Michael Cho**

Scarlet
Witch
花園餐鹿
Sweetheart Garden Steak House
紅珊瑚
Pink Coral Café
攝影
2

And so it came to pass that a man of great wealth sought the love of a fair and comely maiden.
But the rich man himself was not a pleasure to the eyes, nor was he good of heart or deed.
"No," the maiden said. "No, you may not have me. I will find love with one who brings joy to mine own heart."
The rich man was not used to being denied. He offered her wealth.
"No," the maiden said. "No, you may not buy me. I will be won by he who is true."
The rich man pondered this dilemma.
He knew he was not true.
He knew he brought no joy.
But he was wealthy.
And so with a chest of gold and precious things he sought a **Tongji**, whose skills with magic were most revered.
And soon the maiden, utterly bewitched by the Tongji's enchantments, was in the rich man's arms.

And it came to pass that a young man was poor and sought great riches.
And it came to pass that a woman sought to live in a place of great splendor.
And it came to pass that a group of men, who by gathering so were called a Triad, sought greater power over other gatherings of similar men.
And it came to pass that a woman grey of hair and stooped of shoulders sought to be young anew.

And so all these people, taking things of wealth with them, as little or as much as they had...
...sought the Dark Tongji who resided in their city.

HONG KONG.
TODAY.
ON SALE
TATTOO
OK BAR
YUM CHA
Shop
HELLO.
MADAM LAN?
YES?
I'M WANDA MAXIMOFF. I...
...I KNEW YOUR DAUGHTER.
MY DAUGHTER IS DEAD.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY.
SHE WAS GREAT.
SHE CERTAINLY WAS.

SO WHAT DO YOU WANT, IF YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE MY DAUGHTER ABIDES WITH HER ANCESTORS?
SHE HAD A DAUGHTER--YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER, OBVIOUSLY. I HOPED TO SPEAK WITH HER, BUT I'M FINDING IT HARD TO LOCATE HER.
I HOPE NOTHING UNTOWARD HAS BECOME OF HER.
YOUR CANTONESE IS QUITE GOOD.
YOU HAVE ALL THE NUANCES OF HONG KONG PRONUNCIATION--NOT A HINT OF GUANGDONG.
ACTUALLY, IT'S THE HEX I'VE CAST ALLOWING US TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER THAT'S "QUITE GOOD"...
...BUT NO NEED FOR HER TO KNOW THAT.
THANK YOU.
IT WASN'T MEANT AS A COMPLIMENT.
I WAS BROUGHT UP TO SUSPECT ANY WHITE PERSON WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LANGUAGE IS TOO PERFECT.
AND WHY IS THAT?
THERE IS A SAYING... "PERFECT HERE, IMPERFECT THERE."
MEANING?
WHEN SOMEONE TRIES TOO HARD IN ONE AREA, LOOK FOR THE PLACES THEY'RE NOT TRYING AT ALL, AND THEREIN LIES THE TRUTH.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A FAMILIAR SAYING.
REALLY? YOU MAY HAVE IT, IF YOU LIKE. I JUST MADE IT UP.

WHY DO YOU SEEK MY GRANDDAUGHTER?
IS IT TO DO WITH HER MOTHER'S OTHER LIFE? IS IT TO DO WITH MAGIC...
...SCARLET WITCH?
OH, YOU'RE SURPRISED I RECOGNIZED YOU? DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE'S THIS INCREDIBLE NEW INVENTION CALLED THE *TELEVISION?* WHY, IT'S ONLY BEEN AROUND FOR SIXTY OR SEVENTY YEARS.
YOU'RE AN AVENGER, FOR GOD'S SAKE.
AND YOU'RE WEARING *SCARLET.*
ANYWAY, IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO ALICE ABOUT HER MOTHER, YOU MIGHT LEAVE WANTING.
HERE IS HER LOCATION, NEVERTHELESS.
SO SHE WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH HER MOTHER'S LEGACY? I MAY BE ABLE TO RELATE TO HER--I RECENTLY LEARNED I HAVE SOMETHING OF A LEGACY WITH MY MOTHER, TOO.
THAT'S AT LEAST HOW SHE WANTS IT TO *APPEAR.*
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
ALICE'S FATHER WAS WHITE, DID YOU KNOW THAT?
YES, I BELIEVE I DID. HE WAS A POLICEMAN.
HONG KONG WILL ALWAYS BE A PLACE OF TWO CULTURES, MISS MAXIMOFF--THE CHINESE AND THE BRITISH. EAST AND WEST. AND HONESTLY...THE ISLAND HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMEWHAT TROUBLED BECAUSE OF IT.
MY GRANDDAUGHTER IS ALSO OF THOSE TWO CULTURES, DIFFERING IN ONLY ONE WAY...

"...SHE MEETS HER TROUBLES HEAD-ON."
SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT, HONG KONG.
公司

KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
THUNK
KRAK

NICELY DONE, DETECTIVE GULLIVER. SO DOES THIS MARK THE END OF THE "LUCKY FEW TRIAD"?
THERE ARE PROBABLY A FEW STRAGGLERS LURKING OFF IN THE SHADOWS, BUT THE TRIAD DEFINITELY GOT FEWER... AND A LOT LESS LUCKY. SIR.
POLICE
YOU'RE NOT ONE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, ARE YOU, ALICE?
THEY HAD THEIR CHANCE TO PLAY NICE, CAPTAIN.
THAT WASN'T THE GAME THEY HAD IN MIND.
HOLD ON, LET ME CHECK SOMETHING.
TO DO WITH THIS CASE?
I'LL TELL YOU WHEN I KNOW.
WANDA MAXIMOFF.
I'M FLATTERED YOU RECOGNIZE ME.

YOU'RE THE **SCARLET FLIPPING WITCH.** EVERYONE KNOWS WHO YOU ARE.
AND MY GRANDMOTHER CALLED, TOLD ME YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME, SO THAT CERTAINLY HELPED.
GUM?
NO, THANK YOU.
MY MUM USED TO TALK ABOUT YOU.
YOUR MOTHER WOULD FIND THE WAY YOU USE YOUR MAGICAL ABILITIES STRANGE, I'LL SAY THAT.
IT TAKES AN EXPERIENCED EYE TO TELL, BUT YOU'RE USING AN EXTREME FORM OF ***DAOIST CHARM MAGIC,*** AM I RIGHT?
YOUR WEAPONS ARE ***ENCHANTED.***
YES. IN A WORD, MY GUNS ARE MAGIC.
MY BRASS KNUCKLES. GOT A SNUB NOSE ON AN ANKLE HOLSTER AND A KNIFE SHEATHED IN BACK AS WELL. ALL OF IT ***MAGICALLY ENHANCED.***
AND NO ONE KNOWS, WHICH IS JUST HOW I LIKE IT.
MY FATHER WAS A HONG KONG DETECTIVE, KILLED BY ONE OF THE TRIADS.
MY MOTHER WAS THE CITY'S MAGICAL HEROINE, THE ***AUGUST WU OF THE CORAL SHORE...*** MURDERED BY A DEMONIC ENTITY.
SO YOU CHOSE YOUR FATHER'S LIFE AND KEEP YOUR INHERITED POWERS A SECRET?
ON THE DOWN-LOW, THAT'S RIGHT.

MY MOTHER WAS OLD-SCHOOL--FLOWING, BRIGHT MAGIC. FLYING AROUND. BIG DISPLAY OF HOOPLA. AND A MASK... EVEN THOUGH SHE DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO HIDE HER IDENTITY.
AND I THINK THAT'S WHAT GOT HER KILLED.
SO, UNTIL I FIND WHO MURDERED HER--A DEMON IS ALL I KNOW SO FAR--I'LL KEEP DOWNPLAYING MY POWERS. THAT WAY--HOPEFULLY--I'LL FIND MY MUM'S KILLER BEFORE IT DECIDES TO COME FIND ME.
SO, YOU'RE DETECTIVE ALICE GULLIVER TO THE WORLD AND SECRETLY THE AUGUST WU OF THE--
WHO HAS TIME FOR THAT MOUTHFUL? IF YOU WANT TO CALL ME ANYTHING TO DO WITH HOCUS-POCUS...
...I'M *THE WU.*
BUT, YOU'RE NOT HERE FOR CONVERSATION...
...ALTHOUGH I WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU WERE.
SO WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WELL, I FELT IT THE POLITE THING TO INFORM YOU I'M HERE IN YOUR CITY ON A CASE.
CONSIDER ME INFORMED. AND?
HONESTLY? WHAT I'M UP AGAINST...
...IS A TWO-WITCH JOB.
OKAY, I'M IN.
THEN STEP THIS WAY.

KOWLOON WALLED CITY PARK.
DO YOU KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PLACE?
OF COURSE, THIS IS THE SITE OF THE KOWLOON WALLED CITY, UNTIL IT WAS ALL TORN DOWN IN '93.
THIS LAND IS HAUNTED WITH THE DEAD FROM WHEN THAT CITY STOOD HERE. ALL THE MURDERS THAT HAPPENED IN THE LAWLESS PLACE BACK THEN HAS LEFT IT...
...WITH COUNTLESS SOULS IN TORMENT.
THEY ARE HERE.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE DARK TONGJI?...
...I PRESUME YOU'RE AWARE OF WHO HE IS.
WARLOCK. PRACTICES EVIL MAGIC. GRANTER OF WISHES.
HE'S NEVER BROKEN THE LAW--NOTHING I CAN PROVE, ANYWAY--SO I HAVE TO LEAVE HIM BE.

JOHNNY.
YES? YES, MOST REVERED DARK TONGJI? HOW MAY YOUR WISHES BE MET?
I FEAR WE WILL SOON HAVE VISITORS...
...AND IF SO, I WOULD BID YOU WELCOME THEM UNGRACIOUSLY.
HOW MANY MEN WILL THIS REQUIRE, MY LORD?
OH, I EXPECT YOU'LL REQUIRE EVERYONE.
I HAVE DEALT WITH OTHER THREATS IN MY LONG LIFE...
...THE ENGLISH...
...THE JAPANESE...
...AND MAGICAL HEROES, OF COURSE, LIKE THE WU'S OWN MOTHER AND GRANDFATHER.
I HAD HOPED THESE BOTHERSOME OCCURRENCES WERE AT AN END.
PERHAPS THAT IS NEVER TO BE.
MY LORD?
NOTHING. I WAS MUSING OUT LOUD. GO ABOUT YOUR TASK...
...AS I, TOO, PREPARE.

I DO CROSS PATHS WITH A TRIAD HE'S RUMORED TO HAVE A STAKE IN. THE *MISSING SIXES.*
THEY'RE MAGICALLY POWERED, WHICH IS WHY I HAVEN'T HAD MORE SUCCESS. I THINK HE EMPOWERS THEM-- CONTROLS AND EXTORTS FROM THEM, TOO.
BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT.
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT TO ASK *WHERE* HE GETS HIS POWERS, THIS DARK TONGJI?
THE WAY I GOT MINE, INHERITED THEM FROM SOMEONE IN HIS FAMILY.
OR HE LEARNED THE ARTS. WITCHES DO--MANY GREAT ONES...BUT, SINCE YOU'RE ASKING ME *HERE*, I'M GUESSING IT'S LINKED TO THIS PARK SOMEHOW.
THE GHOSTS OF THOSE MURDERED AND EARTHBOUND--HE DRAWS HIS POWER FROM THEIR *PAIN.*
RECENTLY, I'VE FELT THEIR ANGUISH. IT HAS BECOME *OVERWHELMING.* MAGIC AT IT'S SICKEST. THE GHOSTS DREW ME HERE SO I MIGHT CLEANSE THIS PLACE AND SEND THEM ON...
...THE TONGJI WILL SEEK TO PREVENT THAT, NATURALLY. AND TO DEFEAT HIM REQUIRES A WITCH EQUALLY SEEPED IN EASTERN MAGIC AS HE.
AHH, AND THERE IT IS. YOU NEED MY *MOTHER'S* MAGIC.
YOUR MOTHER?
ALICE, YOUR MOTHER'S DEAD. IT'S *YOU* I NEED. *YOUR* MAGIC.
I NEED *THE WU.*

DO YOU AT LEAST HAVE A *PLAN?*
YES.
THE TONGJI ABIDES RIGHT HERE, AROUND US, OVER US, IN THIS SPOT AND YET IN HIS OWN SEPARATE DIMENSION.
SO THE FIRST STEP-- I CAST THIS HEX FOR US TO ENTER INTO IT...
...AND YOU DEFEAT HIM.
SO WHAT DO YOU DO WHILE I'M BUSY "DEFEATING"?
WELL, HIS TRIAD SEEKS TO GREET US, FOR ONE THING...
...SO I'LL GREET THEM RIGHT BACK...AND FREE THE GHOSTS AS BEST I CAN.
NOW HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER BOTH...

...AND GO GET THE BAD GUY.
HELL OF A PLAN.
COME, MISS GULLIVER. THE WU. COME SIT BY ME. LET'S TALK THROUGH WHAT I KNOW IS BUT A *MISUNDERSTANDING*.
SIT AND CHAT? I DON'T SEE THAT HAPPENING.
RIGHT NOW WANDA MAXIMOFF IS TRYING TO REMOVE YOUR LINK TO THE GHOSTS YOU HOLD CAPTIVE.
SHE GRANTS THEM PEACE. I END YOUR REIGN.
BAH. WHAT FOOLISHNESS. SHE WILL NOT DEFEAT MY MEN.
OH YEAH?...
"...I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE."

VERY WELL. THE TEDIOUS DANCE OF MAGICAL STRIFE.
GAH!
LITTLE WITCH.
"THE WU."
YOU ARE NOT YOUR MOTHER, I WILL SAY THAT.
I KNEW YOUR MOTHER. HER *KILLER*, TOO, FOR THAT MATTER.
WANT TO KNOW WHO KILLED YOUR MOTHER, ALICE? LAY DOWN THOSE RIDICULOUS MAGIC PISTOLS AND I'LL TELL YOU.
I'LL FIND MY MOTHER'S KILLER *WITHOUT* YOUR HELP.
IDIOT.
NO NEED TO BE RUDE ABOUT IT.

NOTHING.
NO POWER TO YOUR MAGIC AT ALL.
I HAVE BEEN THE DARK TONGJI FOR A CENTURY. AN OAK.
YOU ARE A SAPLING. YOUR MAGIC IS NOTHING.
DON'T LISTEN, ALICE.
DON'T BELIEVE HIM!
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!
DON'T WORRY, WANDA, I HAVE THIS.
IN FACT, THE NEXT BULLET I FIRE WILL BE MY MOST BEWITCHED EVER.
LET'S SEE HOW YOUR MAGICAL DEFENSES FARE AGAINST IT, "MIGHTY OAK."
HEH! PATHETI--
THNK
OH. IT'S NOT--

JUST A BULLET.
SOMETIMES WITCHCRAFT IS WITCHCRAFT. AND SOMETIMES...
...IT'S TRICKERY.
AND THERE--WITH THE TONGJI DEAD I DIDN'T EVEN NEED TO CAST MY HEX.
THE SPIRITS ARE FREE, ALICE, YOU DID IT.
YOU DID IT ALL.
GO ONE, GO ALL.

I SUPPOSE IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW-- IT'S DONE...
...BUT I STILL WISH YOU HADN'T KILLED THE DARK TONGJI.
YEAH, WELL, YOU WEREN'T THE ONE FIGHTING HIM.
I ACCEPT THAT YOU DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY, SO I SUPPOSE IT ENDED THE WAY IT HAD TO...
...WITH A BULLET.
HE WAS PREPARED FOR MAGIC. AND TRUTHFULLY, I DON'T THINK I HAD THE POWER TO DEFEAT HIM SPELL FOR SPELL.
BUT HE WASN'T EXPECTING A SIMPLE SLUG.
IT WAS SOMETHING YOU SAID EARLIER, ACTUALLY, THAT GAVE ME THE IDEA. HOW I SHOULD HONOR MY MOTHER **AND** MY FATHER. IT WAS THE KIND OF SNEAKY THING MY DAD WOULD HAVE PULLED.
MADE ME REALIZE I NEED TO TRAIN, THOUGH...GET MY SPELLS AND POWERS STRONGER.
SO YOU'RE MORE READILY ACCEPTING OF YOUR MOTHER'S LINEAGE?
MAYBE. CHECK BACK WITH ME.
HEY...ERR...DO YOU WANT TO GRAB A DRINK?
WE CAN DISCUSS... HOW I DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.
I DON'T DRINK, ALICE. I'M SORRY.
HOW ABOUT TEA? I KNOW AN AMAZING TEA HOUSE.
OH. NOW *TEA*, I DO.
NICE TO MEET YOU, WANDA.
NICE TO MEET YOU, ALICE.

Scarlet Witch

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I'M NOT THE FIRST TO SAY THIS-- CERTAINLY WON'T BE THE LAST...
IT'S JUST--
--TO LIVE HERE--
--WALK HERE--
--IS TO WALK AMONG GIANTS.
NO, I'M NOT THE FIRST TO SAY IT, BUT--
I LOVE NEW YORK.

FRIDAY.
ROLAND GRAND
PSYCHIATRIST
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY
HELLO, DOCTOR GRAND.
AH, WANDA...

WELL, LOOK AT YOU. YOU SEEM QUITE *CHIPPER* TODAY.
"CHIPPER"? THAT TERM MAKES ME THINK OF *FARGO*, WHICH I'M GUESSING ISN'T YOUR INTENTION.
CHIPPER MEANS HAPPY... FILLED WITH THE JOYS OF THE HOUR.
WELL, I'D SAY THAT APTLY DESCRIBES ME, SO SURE, I'M QUITE CHIPPER. THE WALK HERE WAS WONDERFUL...A PERFECT AUTUMN DAY.
"OF COURSE, I RAN INTO A COMPLICATION ON THE WAY HERE...

VUDAR!
"BUT ONLY A SLIGHT ONE.
"ANYWAY..."
...IF WE'RE STARTING, I WANTED TO TALK A BIT ABOUT MY MOTHER, SO--
BEFORE WE GET INTO THINGS...*UM*...YOU REMEMBER THE RULES?
OF COURSE, YOUR *PAYMENT*. HERE IT IS.
EXCELLENT.
NOW...

JUST THAT I FEEL THESE VISITS ARE HELPING. I'M CERTAINLY LESS FEARFUL THAT I'M GOING DOWN A BAD PATH.
I'M MORE CONFIDENT. MORE HAPPY. CHIPPER, AS YOU CALL IT.
...YOU WERE SAYING?
IT'S APPARENT IN YOUR MANNER THAT YOU'RE NOT THE SAD WOMAN WHO WALKED IN HERE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.
BUT WHAT IS IT YOU WANTED TO TALK ABOUT? YOU WERE JUST STARTING TO SAY WHEN I INTERRUPTED YOU.
MY MOTHER.
WHAT ABOUT HER?
WELL, THAT'S THE THING. I DON'T KNOW "WHAT" ABOUT HER. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.
FOR A LONG TIME, I THOUGHT I WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A ROMANY WOMAN AND MAN--THAT I WAS A MUTANT. I THOUGHT THAT WAS HOW WE GOT OUR ABILITIES--MINE AND MY BROTHER PIETRO'S.
IT SEEMS THAT WAS ALL A FABRICATION--

"--OUR POWERS WERE DUE TO THE MAD SCIENCE OF A MANIAC KNOWN AS THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.*
"HE *GENETICALLY MODIFIED* MY BROTHER AND ME."
HMM.
YES?
OF COURSE I'M NO EXPERT BUT IT SEEMS TO ME--WELL--IN THE CRAZY WORLD WHERE GENETIC MODIFICATION IS EVEN A *TOPIC OF CONVERSATION...*
...I COULD SEE HOW ONE MIGHT GRANT SOMEONE SPEED. OR FLIGHT. OR--I DON'T KNOW--THAT SORT OF THING.
MAGIC, HOWEVER--ISN'T THAT A SKILL SET? SPELLS TO LEARN AND SUCH?
AM I WRONG, WANDA? IN WHICH CASE, SCHOOL ME.
NO, DR. GRAND, YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT.
AT BEST, I CAN ONLY SPECULATE THAT THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY ALTERED ME IN SUCH A WAY THAT I'M MORE RECEPTIVE TO MAGICAL ENERGY--THAT I'M SOMEHOW MORE EASILY ABLE TO "CONTROL THE CHAOS"--

"THEN, RECENTLY, I LEARNED MY REAL MOTHER IS A DIFFERENT ROMANY WOMAN. *NATALYA MAXIMOFF--*"
"SAME LAST NAME?"
"YES, I'M ASSUMING THERE MAY BE A FAMILIAL LINK WITH THE COUPLE WHO RAISED ME--I'M STILL LOOKING INTO THAT."
OH. AND HOW'S THAT INVESTIGATION GOING?
WELL, I'VE JUST BEGUN--PLUS THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT MY MOTHER THAT AGATHA KNOWS, BUT SHE'S NOT TELLING.
THE *GHOST.*
AGATHA, THE GHOST.
I'M NEVER NOT A LITTLE *RATTLED* SAYING THAT.
WHY DO YOU THINK SHE WON'T TELL YOU? DO YOU THINK SHE BELIEVES THAT SHE'S PROTECTING YOU?
WHY WOULD YOU ASSUME THAT SHE'S BEING *PROTECTIVE?*
IT'S JUST THAT WHEN YOU DESCRIBE HER--HOW SHE ENJOYS SCARING THE CLEANER AND THE MAILMAN, HOW SHE NEVER LETS YOU FORGET THAT YOU KILLED HER.
THROUGH YOUR DESCRIPTIONS, I GET THE DISTINCT SENSE THAT SHE LOVES YOU AND WANTS TO PROTECT YOU.
YES, PERHAPS TOO MUCH...

...PERHAPS I WOULDN'T ONLY NOW BE STEPPING OUT INTO THE WORLD IF AGATHA...
...AND MY BROTHER *PIETRO* AND *THE AVENGERS* HADN'T ALWAYS JUMPED UP SO QUICKLY TO PROTECT ME.
THEN PERHAPS I MIGHT HAVE HAD TO LEARN HOW TO DO A BETTER JOB OF LOOKING AFTER MYSELF AND CONTROLLING MY POWERS.
DO YOU FEEL SOME SENSE OF **BETRAYAL?**
AT WHAT?
WELL, IF AGATHA *KNEW* WHO YOUR MOTHER REALLY WAS--AND CHOSE NOT TO TELL YOU--IF THAT HAPPENED TO ME, I'D CERTAINLY FEEL LET DOWN, AT THE VERY LEAST.
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. WITH *WITCHES,* I MEAN.
"FATE. WE WITCHES ARE VERY BIG ON FATE."
MY DEAR, YOU'VE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I WANTED TO TELL YOU. YOU UNDERSTAND ABOUT FATE, THOUGH--
YOU HAD TO FIND OUT ONLY WHEN YOU WERE *MEANT* TO.
BUT YOU LET ME THINK THOSE PEOPLE WERE MY *PARENTS.* YOU LET ME THINK THIS WHOLE TIME THAT MY FATHER WAS--
HOW *COULD* YOU?
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH. AND I SUPPOSE YOU HATE ME.
I COULD NEVER HATE YOU, AGATHA, YOU OLD DRAMA QUEEN. BUT STILL...YOU MIGHT HAVE DROPPED ME A *HINT* BEFORE NOW.
SOMETHING SUBTLE LIKE "DON'T WORRY ABOUT MUTANTS, MAGNETO'S NOT YOUR DAD" WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE.
"HMMM..."

YOU'RE "HMMING" AGAIN, DR. GRAND.
IT'S JUST--
--YOU'RE LYING TO ME.
OH?
REALLY? WELL, NOW YOU'VE GOTTEN MY ATTENTION.
AND TO YOURSELF. AT THE VERY LEAST, YOU'RE MASSAGING THE TRUTH.
I THINK YOU MAY WELL BE HAPPIER AND MORE CONFIDENT... BUT YOU CONTINUE TO EXHIBIT THIS TRAIT FROM BEFORE, THAT YOU WOULD DO WELL TO KEEP IN MIND:
YOU SAY THAT YOU'RE JUST BEGINNING THE INVESTIGATION INTO YOUR MOTHER. AND YET YOU'VE KNOWN ABOUT HER FOR A WHILE NOW.
YES, BUT AS I TOLD YOU IN OUR PRIOR SESSIONS, WITCHCRAFT IS BROKEN AND I'M ON A MISSION--
AND YET, YOU FIND TIME TO SEE ME AND TAKE STROLLS IN MANHATTAN ON A BRISK DAY SUCH AS THIS MORNING.
WHEN YOU HAD YOUR MOST EXTREME MENTAL BREAKDOWN--

"WHEN I DISASSEMBLED THE AVENGERS, YOU MEAN. THAT WAS A LONG STRANGE ROAD, DOCTOR."
"ONE OF THE FATALITIES WAS THE VISION, YOUR EX-HUSBAND."
EVEN THOUGH HE'S BACK NOW, FROM ALL ACCOUNTS.
HE'S REJOINED THE AVENGERS, THAT'S RIGHT.

BUT HE HAD BEEN YOUR *HUSBAND.* THERE MUST HAVE STILL BEEN SOME LOVE OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, *AFFECTION* AND *REGARD* BETWEEN YOU, CORRECT?
HE'D CHANGED BEFORE THAT, DOCTOR--HE'D LOST THE HUMANITY THAT I SAW GROW WITHIN HIM DURING OUR TIME TOGETHER, SO--
YES OR NO?
OF COURSE I RETAINED SOME AFFECTION FOR HIM--EVEN COMFORT AT TIMES. IF NOTHING ELSE, HE WAS ALWAYS GOOD TO ME.
AND YET, YOU DID NOTHING TO HELP RESTORE HIM WHEN THE AVENGERS HAD HIM IN STORAGE, RIPPED APART.
WITH ALL THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO DO WITH YOUR POWERS, AT NO POINT DID IT OCCUR TO YOU TO HELP YOUR EX-HUSBAND?
CONSIDERING YOU WERE THE CAUSE OF HIS STATE, WHY DIDN'T YOU MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO SET THINGS RIGHT?
YOUR OTHER LOVE--"SIMON WILLIAMS" I HAVE WRITTEN HERE FROM A FEW SESSIONS BACK--
--HIS ESSENCE--"SOUL," IF YOU BELIEVE IN SUCH THINGS--IS STILL WITHIN THE BODY OF ANOTHER HEROINE.
ROGUE. SHE AND SIMON SHARE THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS.
AND THAT *SUITS* THE PAIR OF THEM? I'D IMAGINE NOT.
BUT AGAIN, YOU CHOOSE NOT TO DO ANYTHING TO EXTRICATE WILLIAMS.
AND...
YES? I CAN'T *WAIT* FOR THIS.
NO NEED TO GET HOSTILE, WANDA, YOU PAY ME TO BE HONEST.
YOU'RE RIGHT. OF COURSE. WHAT ELSE?
THE CHILDREN.

BILLY AND TOMMY.
YOU'RE THEIR MOTHER, AND YET YOU BARELY SPEAK OF THEM. YOU RARELY SEE THEM. THEY CERTAINLY DON'T SEEM AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR LIFE.
IT'S DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH, DR. GRAND. I STILL WRESTLE WITH THAT ONE.
THEY WERE THE REINCARNATED SPIRITS OF MY DEAD CHILDREN-- BABIES THAT I CREATED WHEN I WAS MARRIED TO THE VISION.
"THEY WEREN'T HUMAN, REALLY. THEIR SOULS WERE PART OF A DEMON. IT'S VERY HORRIBLE AND CONFUSING AND SOMETHING I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT.
"THE BABIES' SOULS 'DIED' AND I WAS BEREFT--
"SO MUCH OCCURRED AFTER THAT, THE AVENGERS, MY UTTERING THE PHRASE 'NO MORE MUTANTS' AND ALL THAT HAPPENED BECAUSE OF IT.
"THEN TWO BOYS, ONE WITH MY ABILITIES AND ONE WITH THE SPEED POWERS OF MY BROTHER, APPEARED.
"WICCAN AND SPEED, THEY CALL THEMSELVES.
"THESE TWO WERE INDEED THE REINCARNATED SOULS OF MY TWO SONS. BUT--
"--THEY WERE TEENAGERS. TOO OLD TO BE MY CHILDREN. EITHER 'BILLY' AND 'TOMMY' WERE TWO NORMAL KIDS UNTIL MY SONS' SOULS TOOK OVER THEIR BODIES, EFFECTIVELY KILLING TWO MORE INNOCENT LIVES.
"OR THEIR SPIRITS WENT BACK IN TIME AND WERE BORN FROM OTHER MOTHERS MORE THAN A DECADE AGO-- WHO RAISED THEM THROUGH CHILDHOOD WHILE I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
"I WOULD HAVE BEEN A TEENAGER MYSELF WHEN THEY WERE BORN.
"I KNOW THAT MAKES ME TERRIBLE."

EITHER WAY, EVEN THOUGH I LOVE THEM...
THE FACT IS, THEY LIVED SO MUCH OF THEIR LIVES *WITHOUT* ME.
I SIMPLY DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE AROUND THEM. I MEAN, I TRY WHEN I SEE THEM. I DO.
YES, WELL, MY POINT HERE IS THE SAME.
I DON'T SEE YOU TRYING TO *CHANGE* THINGS... MAKING THE EFFORT. YOU'RE REPRESSING YOUR PAST, PRETENDING THAT IT ISN'T THERE. PERHAPS THAT'S WHY YOU KEEP SO MANY PLATES SPINNING ALL THE TIME.
WHAT ARE YOU TELLING ME, DR. GRAND?
THAT DESPITE THIS NEW WANDA MAXIMOFF, GOING OUT LOOKING TO "HEAL" WITCHCRAFT...
...THERE'S STILL A PART OF YOU THAT REMAINS SCARED TO ACT. FROZEN, AS YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST.
YOU COMPLAIN OF PEOPLE OVERPROTECTING YOU, BUT AT NO TIME DID YOU EVER TRY TO STOP THEM.
IN FACT, FROM EVERYTHING YOU'VE RELATED IN PRIOR VISITS...IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ALMOST *WELCOMED* THEIR INTERFERENCE.
I SEE THAT PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR HASN'T CHANGED, DESPITE OUR SESSIONS.

AS MUCH AS THIS MISSION YOU'RE ON TO SAVE WITCHCRAFT MIGHT SEEM PROACTIVE-- AND IT IS--
--IT'S ALSO A WAY OF PUTTING OFF DEALING WITH OTHER THINGS. YOUR MOTHER-- YOUR PAST-- SECRETS AND TRUTHS--
--THINGS TOO DIFFICULT OR PAINFUL OR FRIGHTENING.
THE FACT REMAINS...
...YOU NEED TO FACE YOUR PAST IF YOU WANT TO FACE YOURSELF. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.
YES, BUT I'M DOING ALL I--
OUR TIME'S UP, WANDA. WE'LL HAVE TO RESUME THINGS NEXT TIME.
YES, DOCTOR GRAND, I UNDERSTAND.
OH, AND AS USUAL, DON'T FORGET MY PAYMENT.

THURSDAY.
MOTHER!

FRIDAY.
DR. GRAND.
WANDA. YOU LOOK--I'M SENSING A *SADNESS* ABOUT YOU. IS ANYTHING THE MATTER?
YES, AS A MATTER OF FACT--
OH, BEFORE WE FORGET...MY FEE.
HERE.
SIGH
I WAS HOPING THIS ONCE YOU'D FORGET.
NOT THAT IT MATTERS--NOT AFTER ALL THE OTHER PAYMENTS YOU'VE COLLECTED FROM ME. THAT SHIP HAS SAILED.
I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU, WANDA.
WE SPOKE ABOUT HOW FRUSTRATED I AM THAT EVERYONE'S ALWAYS TRYING TO PROTECT ME.
YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE BOTHERS ME?
PEOPLE WHO ASSUME I'M SLOW ON THE UPTAKE. THAT I NEED THINGS *EXPLAINED* TO ME. THAT I'M *STUPID.*

I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING, DR. GRAND. I'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG.
THIS HAS ALL BEEN AN ELABORATE CON.
I KNOW WHO YOU *REALLY* ARE.
OH, YOU DO?
THAT'S THE MOST INSULTING THING, REALLY. WE'VE *MET* BEFORE AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE EVER WORN A *MASK.* I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT IN YOUR COLORFUL OUTFIT AND YOU GREW A *BEARD*--BUT COME ON! I RECOGNIZED YOU INSTANTLY.
"YOUR REAL NAME IS *MAYNARD TIBOLDT* AND WHEN YOU'RE NOT POSING AS A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL, YOU'RE THE *RINGMASTER* OF THE *CIRCUS OF CRIME.*
"WHILE YOU'VE BEEN CONDUCTING MY THERAPY...YOU'VE ALSO BEEN USING YOUR *MASTERY* OF *HYPNOTISM* TO CONTROL MY ACTIONS.
OR SO YOU THOUGHT.
OR SO I *THOUGHT?*
A FEW MONTHS PAST, I FELT THE FAMILIAR TICKLE ON THE BACK OF MY NECK--AND I KNEW INSTANTLY SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO MESMERIZE ME.
YOU COMPELLED ME TO SEE A THERAPIST--SO THAT IT COULD BE YOU IN THIS GUISE OF "DOCTOR GRAND."

SUBSEQUENT HYPNOTIC MESMERISMS OCCURRED DURING THOSE SESSIONS--
AND NO, I WASN'T MEANT TO REMEMBER, BUT OF COURSE I DID.
YOU MADE ME COMMIT THEFT. JEWELRY MAINLY-- EXPENSIVE. YOU HAD ME TELEPORT THE GEMS FROM LOCATIONS ALL ABOUT THE COUNTRY EVERY WEEK.
"MY 'PAYMENT' TO YOU.
"OF COURSE, I'D HEXED YOU INTO SEEING AND BELIEVING THAT THE JEWELRY WAS *REAL* AND NOT WORTHLESS *GLASS COPIES."*
ANYTHING TO ADD, "DOCTOR"?
I DON'T--*ERR*-- DAMN! YOU WERE ONTO ME THE *WHOLE* TIME? I FELT CERTAIN I'D--
BUT IF YOU KNEW WHO I WAS, WHY GO ALONG WITH THE CHARADE? IT'S BEEN *MONTHS.* YOU COULD HAVE *EXPOSED* AND *DEFEATED* ME AT THE ONSET.
HONESTLY?
I'M YOUR "PSYCHIATRIST," WANDA, WHAT DO WE HAVE IF NOT *HONESTY* BETWEEN EACH OTHER?
HA.
HAHA.

YOU WERE GOOD AT YOUR SIDE OF THE CHARADE. TOO GOOD. YOUR PSYCHIATRIC ADVICE WAS EXCELLENT. ROUNDED, GROUNDED, SAGE.
YOU HAVE A *GENUINE GIFT.*
WELL, KEEPING THAT CIRCUS RABBLE IN LINE TOOK A GOOD DEAL OF PSYCHOLOGY. I DARE SAY THAT'S WHERE I GET IT FROM.
BOTTOM LINE--I ENJOYED OUR SESSIONS. AND TRUTHFULLY I WAS ALSO A BIT FLATTERED YOU'D TAKEN SUCH ELABORATE MEASURES JUST FOR ME ALONE.
LAST WEEK, THE THINGS YOU TOLD ME, YOU WERE RIGHT. IT WAS A BREAKTHROUGH. AND IT WAS GETTING SILLY LETTING IT GO ON THIS LONG...I THINK IT'S TIME OUR "SESSIONS" ENDED.
THOUGH I DO WANT TO STRESS THAT YOU GENUINELY HELPED ME AND I'M GRATEFUL.
ROLAND G
GRATEFUL ENOUGH TO LET ME GO?
NOT A CHANCE.
THE POLICE ARE HERE.
THEY'VE ALLOWED ME THIS TIME TO SAY GOODBYE.
SO, IT'S PRISON FOR ME. AGAIN. BUT...
HMM.

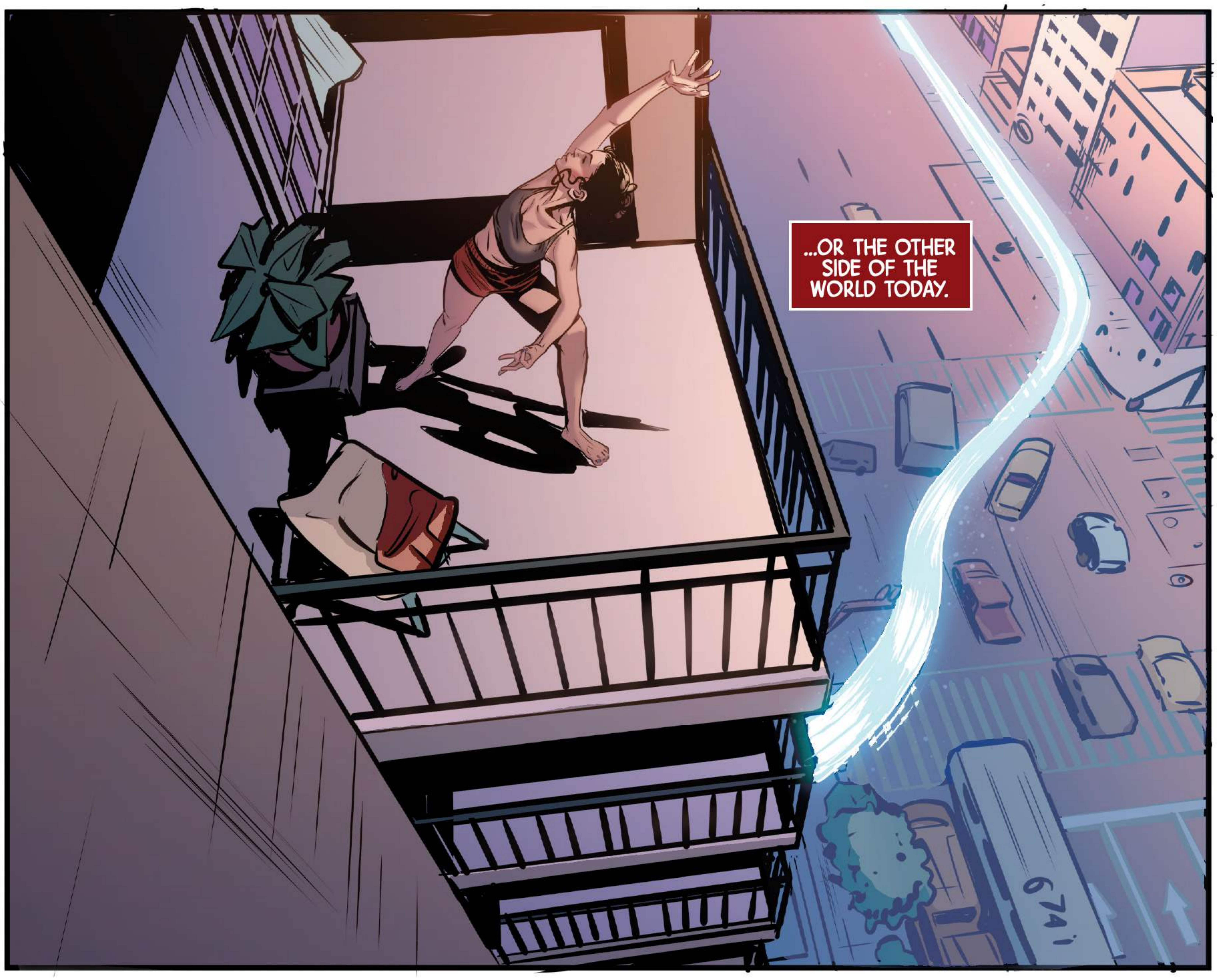
YOU'RE *"HMMING"* YET ***AGAIN,*** "DOCTOR GRAND."
WHILE I'M STILL HERE WITH YOU IN THIS OFFICE, I CAN'T HELP THINKING LIKE "GRAND" WOULD.
SO?
WELL...WHAT ABOUT YOU, WANDA? NO MORE SESSIONS, SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THE HOUR?
OUR LAST SESSION GOT ME REFLECTING ON THINGS.
I'VE PUT OFF FACING MY HERITAGE--I'M STALLING AND...I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW WHAT I HAVE BEEN AFRAID OF ALL OF THIS TIME.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE AFRAID ANYMORE.
AND THAT'S THE BREAKTHROUGH YOU SPOKE OF.
YES. EXACTLY. SO...I'M OFF TO EASTERN EUROPE. I LEAVE TONIGHT.
I SEEK MY PEOPLE, THE ROMA...
...AND THE ANSWERS THEY HOLD.
THANKS TO YOU.
THANKS TO ME, *EH?* WELL, IF THAT IS TRULY THE CASE...
...I'M GLAD.

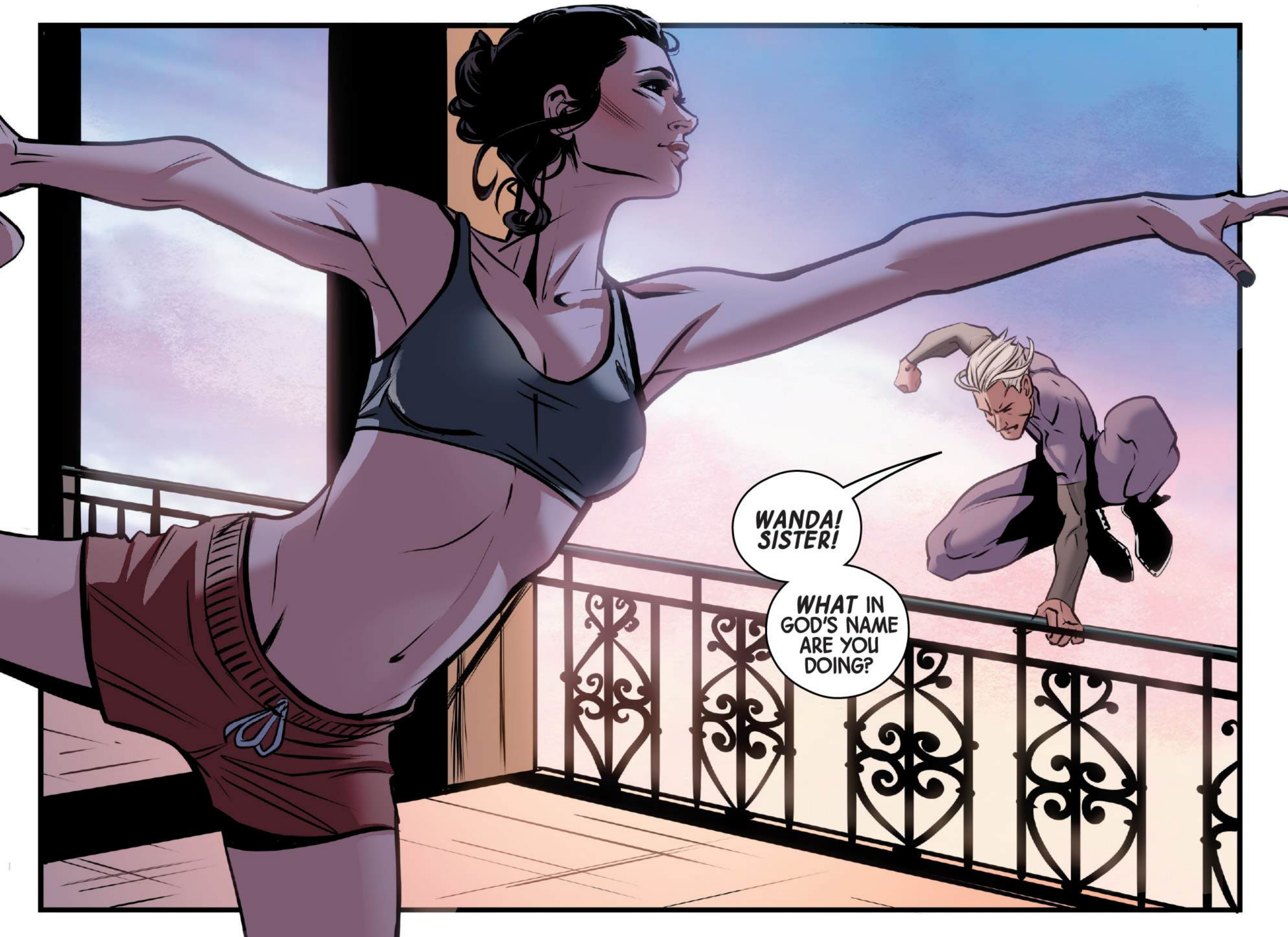
CIVIL WAR II
9

MANHATTAN.

HE'S *COMING.* I THINK--
--NO.
I'M SURE OF IT.
HE'LL BE HERE SOON.

IT'S NOT MY POWERS--NOT A MAGICAL PREMONITION.
NO, EVEN AS CHILDREN, BEFORE OUR ABILITIES MANIFESTED...
...I ALWAYS KNEW WHEN MY BROTHER, PIETRO, WAS ON HIS WAY TO SEE ME...
...FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WOODS GROWING UP...


...OR THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD TODAY.
6741


WANDA! SISTER!
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU DOING?

WELL, NOT TO SOUND OVERLY SMUG OR SARCASTIC, BUT I'D SAY THAT WAS OBVIOUS.
YOGA.
IT'S HOW I GREET THE DAY-- FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS ANYWAY.
YES, AND I'M SURE THAT'S WONDERFUL FOR LAZY HOUSEWIVES WITH TOO MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS, BUT YOU'RE AN ***AVENGER***. YOU'RE ***NEEDED***--WE ***ALL*** ARE.
LAZY HOUSEWIVES? WHAT YEAR IS THIS? 1952?
ANYWAY, IT HELPS RELAX ME, HELPS ME REIN IN MY DARKER THOUGHTS...WHICH YOU KNOW IS A GOOD THING.
I'D RECOMMEND YOU TAKE IT UP, IF YOU'D EVER STAND STILL LONG ENOUGH.
AS TO ME BEING AN AVENGER-- NOT SO MUCH. NOT LATELY, ANYWAY.
NOW, COME HERE AND GIVE YOUR SISTER A HUG.

LISTEN TO ME. I HAVE EXCITING NEWS TO SHARE--
NO. NO TIME. I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK I'M NOT HAPPY TO SEE YOU, WANDA, BUT IN THIS INSTANCE, PLEASANTRIES AND TENDERNESS ARE A LUXURY WE CAN'T AFFORD.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU MUST.
I'VE BEEN... PREOCCUPIED.
THE *CIVIL WAR.*
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE THING BETWEEN STEVE AND TONY THAT HAPPENED A WHILE BACK?
STEVE? NO, THIS IS BETWEEN TONY AND CAPTAIN MARVEL--CAROL DANVERS.
IT BEGAN AFTER WE STOPPED THE INVASION OF THE CELESTIAL DESTRUCTION. YOU WERE THERE, I SAW YOU...

"...YES, STEPHEN STRANGE, YOU AND ALL THE OTHER MAGICAL TYPES FASHIONED SOME KIND OF EPIC SPELL AS PART OF EARTH'S DEFENSE."
I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING TO YOU THEN...BUT I WAS CAUGHT UP IN MY OWN PART OF THE EVENT.
ANYWAY, IT WAS LATER--GOD, WANDA HAVEN'T YOU BEEN FOLLOWING ALL THAT HAPPENED IN THE AFTERMATH?
WELL...I'VE BEEN BUSY, PIETRO. IN FACT, I'VE MADE A FANTASTIC DISCOVERY THAT WE BOTH--
COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO GO NOW. YOUR POWERS-- WE NEED THEM TO WIN-- TO END IT BEFORE MORE BLOOD IS SPILLED.
WANDA, WILL YOU SHUT UP AND DO AS I TELL YOU?!
NO.
I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.

I CONFESS I'M AT A LOSS. I MEAN, HOW MUCH MORE CLEARLY DO I NEED TO EXPLAIN THIS?
I KNOW YOU'RE SLOW TO GRASP THINGS SOMETIMES, BUT I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT MY URGENCY ALONE--
"SLOW TO GRASP"? YOU ARROGANT *ASS!* I SWEAR, SOMETIMES, PIETRO--
YES? SOMETIMES *WHAT?*
THE WAY YOU TALK TO ME--IF YOU WEREN'T MY BROTHER I'D KICK YOU OFF THE BALCONY.
I'VE LET YOU TREAT ME LIKE AN IDIOT FOR TOO LONG NOW. THERE WAS A TIME I WAS SHY AND YOUNG, SURE. I WAS NERVOUS OF MY POWERS--*OUR* POWERS--AND HOW WE'D FARE IN THE WORLD.
BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO.
I'M A WOMAN NOW. ALL GROWN UP. AND *MORE* THAN CAPABLE OF MAKING MY OWN DECISIONS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
ALL RIGHT, YES. YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE. I FORGET SOMETIMES... I...
...YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY LITTLE SISTER.
BY THE SPACE OF THIRTEEN MINUTES.
AND THAT DOESN'T GIVE YOU THE EXCUSE TO TREAT ME LIKE I HAVE A LEARNING DEFICIENCY.

AGAIN, YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M RUDE BY NATURE...I KNOW IT.
KNOW IT? YOU DELIGHT IN IT.
AND PERHAPS IT WAS MY EXPLAINING-- AS RUSHED AS EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT ME--THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE URGENCY CLEAR.
THE INHUMANS HAVE A SEER AMONG THEM--A YOUNG FELLOW NAMED ULYSSES. IT WAS HIS POWER TO FORETELL THAT ALLOWED US TO PREEMPT THE INVASION.
WE FOUND OUT AFTERWARDS THAT CAROL WAS TAKEN WITH THE NOTION OF CONTINUING TO EMPLOY ULYSSES AS AN "ASSET"-- TO END CRIMES *BEFORE* THEY'RE COMMITTED.
TONY STARK QUITE RIGHTLY SAW THIS AS A SLIPPERY SLOPE. AT WHAT POINT DOES "PREVENTION" BECOME ITS OWN UNIQUE FORM OF FASCIST POLICING WHERE PEOPLE ARE PUNISHED FOR THINGS THEY HAVEN'T DONE YET?
AND THAT WAS THAT...EACH OF THEM GOING OFF WITH THEIR DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSITE IDEOLOGIES.
"BUT CAROL GOT HER HANDS ON ULYSSES AND HAD HIM TELL HER WHERE THANOS WAS GOING TO APPEAR NEXT.
"SHE TOOK A TEAM TO FIGHT HIM...

"...A FIGHT THEY LOST.
"JIM RHODES, WAR MACHINE, IS *DEAD.* SHE-HULK IS *BROKEN!*"
IN THE AFTERMATH, TONY AND CAROL HAD...AN ESCALATION OF THEIR DIFFERENCES. IT'S SPILLED OVER EVERYWHERE. EVERYONE HAS TAKEN A SIDE.
AND WHAT SIDE ARE YOU ON, BROTHER?
WHY DO YOU EVEN ASK THAT?
I'M ON TONY'S SIDE, OBVIOUSLY--WE HAVE ENOUGH ON OUR HANDS ALREADY STOPPING ALL THE CRIMES AND GLOBAL CALAMITIES WITHOUT CHASING AFTER "WHAT MIGHT BE."
EVERYTHING HAS AN EFFECT--CAUSE AND EFFECT. YOU KNOW THAT BETTER THAN ANYONE, SISTER.
MAKE ONE CRIME STILLBORN, WHO'S TO SAY YOU'RE NOT SEWING THE SEEDS OF SOMETHING WORSE IN ITS PLACE?

WELL...
...THEN WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
IF IT COMES DOWN TO CHOOSING SIDES, I SIDE WITH CAROL.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? NO. YOU DIDN'T LISTEN, YOU COULDN'T HAVE--
I'LL SAY THIS JUST ONCE MORE, PIETRO, I'M NOT A CHILD.
I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING YOU'VE SAID--FURTHERMORE, I WAS THERE AT THE START, SO I *DO* KNOW HOW THIS ALL BEGAN.
YES, HOW IT ***BEGAN,*** PERHAPS. WHAT ABOUT HOW IT ***ENDED***...FOR JAMES RHODES? WERE YOU AWARE OF THAT, TOO?
NO.
AND THE NEWS SADDENS ME, JIM AND JENNIFER BOTH.
BUT...
...I'M A WITCH, BROTHER. A FACT THAT I'VE RECENTLY LEARNED ***ISN'T*** MERELY DUE TO THE POWER GIVEN ME BY THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY AND THE SKILLS I LATER ACQUIRED BY LEARNING FROM AGATHA.
IT'S MY ***BIRTHRIGHT.*** MY HERITAGE--***OURS,*** PIETRO, FROM OUR ***MOTHER,*** IF YOU'D JUST LISTEN--
LATER. ALL THAT CAN WAIT UNTIL LATER. NOW, JUST TRUST ME, I'M RIGHT AND MY POINT OF VIEW--
IS WRONG.

AS I WAS SAYING...I. AM. A. WITCH.
WITCHES HAVE EMPLOYED SEERS AND ORACLES AND FUTURE SIGHT FOR CENTURIES.
AS FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO JIM AND JEN--I'D SAY WHAT THE HEROES NEED IS INSTRUCTION IN HOW TO INTERPRET THESE PROPHECIES.
AND IF THAT'S WHAT'S REQUIRED OF ME, THEN I'LL GET MY COAT.
OTHERWISE--
OTHERWISE WHAT, SISTER?
WHAT'LL TAKE IT FOR YOU TO FOLLOW ME? MORE BLOOD SPILLED? IS THAT IT?
"BLINDLY." YOU FORGOT TO ADD THAT WORD. "FOLLOW YOU BLINDLY," IN YOUR PREFERRED WORLD WITHOUT SEERS OR PROPHETS.
HAVEN'T I BEEN DOING THAT ALREADY? ISN'T THAT WHAT I'VE DONE OUR WHOLE LIVES?
THINK OF THE MISSTEPS WE BOTH MIGHT NOT HAVE TAKEN WITH SOME FOREWARNING!
AND NOW, AGAIN, YOU EXPECT ME TO SIMPLY JUMP AT THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE?
FOR WHAT?
HERO FIGHTING HERO... HOW OFTEN MUST THAT DREARY DANCE BE PLAYED?
IF YOU WANT MY HELP IN "HEXING" MY FRIENDS INTO COMPLIANCE, I REFUSE. NO, IF THIS IS A "WAR," AS YOU SAY...
...THEN CONSIDER ME SWITZERLAND.

W...WANDA.
HA.
YOU TALK ABOUT HOW YOU'VE MATURED BUT YOU'RE STILL THE SILLY GIRL YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN.
YOU HAVEN'T LISTENED TO A *WORD* I'VE TOLD YOU!
PEOPLE ARE DYING, SISTER. OUR FRIENDS.
MAYBE THAT'S THE PROBLEM, PIETRO... YOU'RE ALWAYS "TELLING" ME.
FIGHTING AND DYING, I BET THEY ARE.
AND MY PRESENCE HAS NEVER STOPPED THAT BEFORE NOW. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS WILL BE ANY DIFFERENT? REMEMBER "FORCE WORKS"? THAT WAS TONY AND ME.
YOU COULD MAKE THEM STOP. YOU KNOW YOU HAVE THE POWER.
FIRST "NO MORE MUTANTS." NOW WHAT? "NO MORE FIGHTING"? "NO MORE DYING"?
HOW ABOUT SIMPLY..."NO MORE".
PIETRO, I LOVE YOU, YOU KNOW THAT...BUT I'M THROUGH BEING YOUR "EASY OUT."
I'M STILL NOT RIGHT FROM ALL THAT HAPPENED BEFORE, DO YOU REALIZE THAT? I'M TROUBLED...IN MY HEAD. SOMETIMES I CRY FOR NO REASON. SOMETIMES I SLEEP ALL DAY.
AND A LOT OF THE REASON COMES DOWN TO THINGS YOU ENCOURAGED ME TO DO.
AND IT'S *ME* WHO ENDED UP PAYING FOR THEM.

WAIT, WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOU IS *MY* FAULT NOW?
I ONLY TOLD YOU WHAT TO DO TO SAVE YOU FROM YOURSELF, DON'T YOU SEE?
THE INSTABILITY IN YOU--
THAT'S YOU BEING POLITE, FOR ONCE. SAY WHAT YOU MEAN, BROTHER-- "INSANITY."
I ACTUALLY WOULDN'T USE THAT WORD, NO. ***BUT***...FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I'VE KNOWN THAT YOU NEEDED GUIDANCE.
I MEAN, I LOOK AT YOUR ROMANTIC LIFE--THE ONE PLACE I COULDN'T GET INVOLVED TO TELL YOU WHO TO LOVE.
YOU HAD A GOOD TRY, THOUGH.
YOU MARRIED THE VISION.
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
"HIM"? "HE" IS A MACHINE. YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE WED A MICROWAVE OVEN.
AH, HERE'S THE PIETRO I KNOW AND DETEST. CRUEL, SPITEFUL, JUDGMENTAL.
AND HERE'S THE WANDA I KNOW, TOO. I SEE IT IN YOUR EYES-- FLICKERING AND UNCERTAIN.
CHASING PHANTOMS-- LITERALLY--A NEW, DEAD MOTHER, NO LESS!--INSTEAD OF FACING WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN THE WORLD.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU CAN BE SO FLIPPANT ABOUT THIS.
PIETRO, I FOUND OUR ***REAL*** MOTHER NATALYA MAXIMOFF. YES, SAME SECOND NAME--PERHAPS RELATED SOMEHOW TO THE COUPLE WE THOUGHT WERE OUR PARENTS.
I'M GOING BACK TO OUR HOMELAND. I WANT TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT HER...
...AND I THINK YOU SHOULD COME WITH ME.
MAGNETO AND MAGDA LENSHERR.
DJANGO AND MARYA MAXIMOFF.
THE WHIZZER AND MISS AMERICA.
DOES IT EVEN MATTER WHO OUR PARENTS ARE ANYMORE? IN THE END, WE ARE WHAT WE'VE MADE OURSELVES TO BE.

I'M DISAPPOINTED. I EXPECTED MORE FROM YOU.
I'M SORRY I CAME HERE.
OH, I COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU.
ME, TOO.
YOU KNOW... I MISS THE GIRL YOU USED TO BE. THE MEEK LITTLE FOLLOWER.
WELL, SHE'S GONE AND ***NEVER*** COMING BACK.
AND IF YOU'RE SO SORRY TO SEE ME, THEN ***YOU*** SHOULD GO, TOO. ***GO ON!***
WHEN I'M READY. I WAS NEVER AS GOOD AT FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS AS ***YOU*** WERE.
THIS IS ***MY*** HOME...
...GET OUT!

OH, SISTER...
...YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT.
YOU'VE ALWAYS NEEDED LOOKING AFTER...
...SO LET ME TAKE CARE OF YOU.
CAN'T BREATHE... PIETRO... BROTHER, PLEA--
NO! I DON'T WANT YOUR MERCY!
I DON'T NEED IT!

NOW.
YOU CAN LEAVE OF YOUR OWN VOLITION...
...OR I CAN THROW YOU OFF THE BALCONY, LIKE I SAID I WOULD EARLIER.
BBQ
I'M SORRY, WANDA.
FOR WHAT? ALMOST KILLING ME JUST NOW?
OR FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE *EVER* DONE TO ME?
I WASN'T-- I WOULD NEVER REALLY HURT YOU--
OH, THEN I GUESS IT'S OKAY.
AND YOU SAY YOU'RE SORRY?
I'M SURE YOU ARE...IN THE MOMENT.
BUT ANOTHER MOMENT PASSES AND YOU'RE BACK TO YOUR OLD, ARROGANT WAYS.

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT KIND OF PERSISTENT BEHAVIOR IS A SIGN OF? DO YOU? I DO.
BELIEVE ME, I'VE RESEARCHED THE STATE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AS WELL AS MINE.
YOU'RE A *SOCIOPATH.*
AND I REALIZE NOW...
...YOU'RE NOT GOOD FOR ME.
AND...
...I...I *NEVER* WANT TO *SEE* YOU AGAIN.
DON'T WORRY.
YOU *WON'T.*

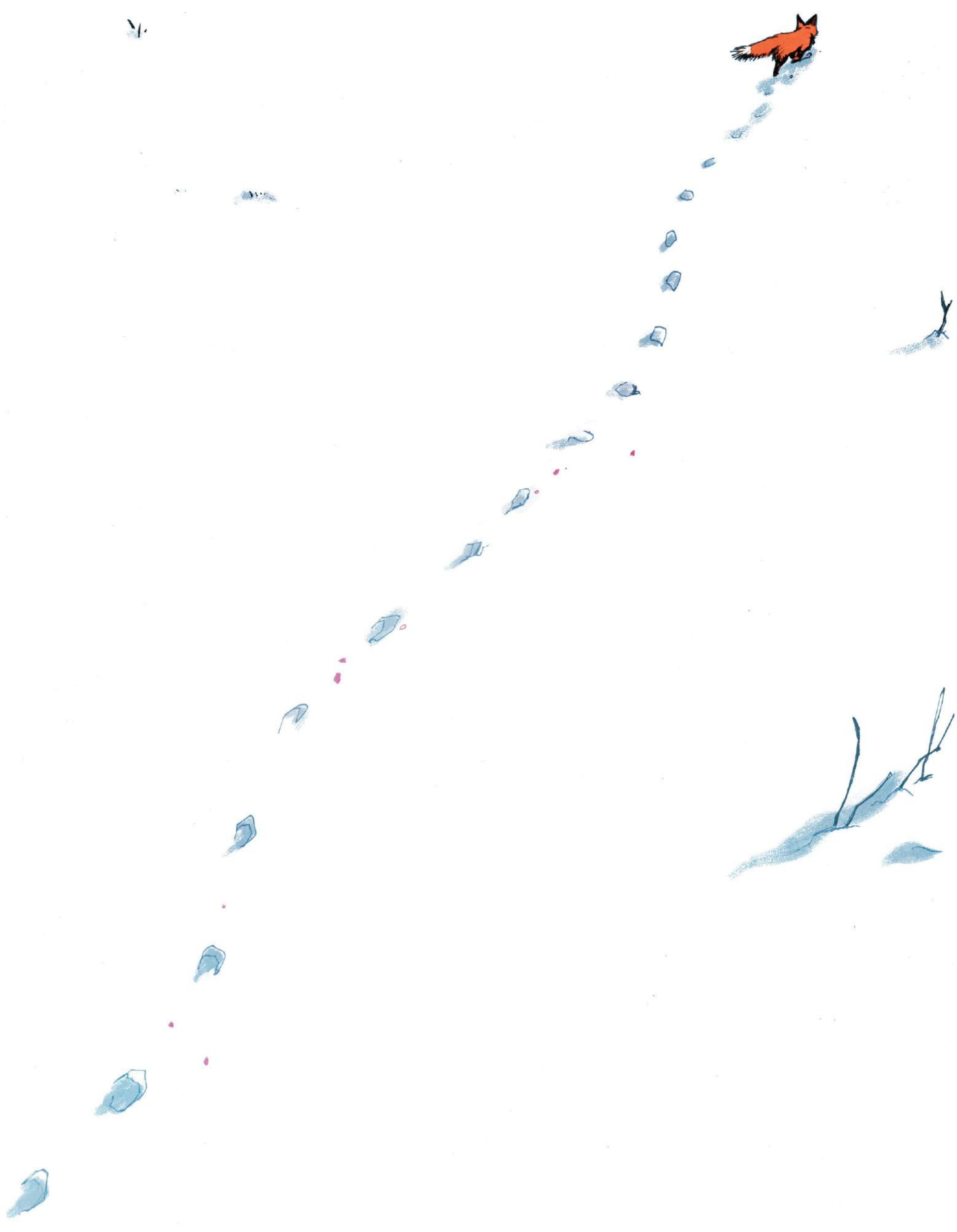
PIETRO.

3 variant by **Siya Oum**

スカーレット・ウィッチ
SCARLET WITCH
10
AJA + KAWASE
10

THE NIMBLE YOUNG FOX
LEAPS THROUGH SNOW AND SHADOW WITH
BLOOD UPON HIS LIPS

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE HAIKU
BUNKYŪ ERA (1861–1864)

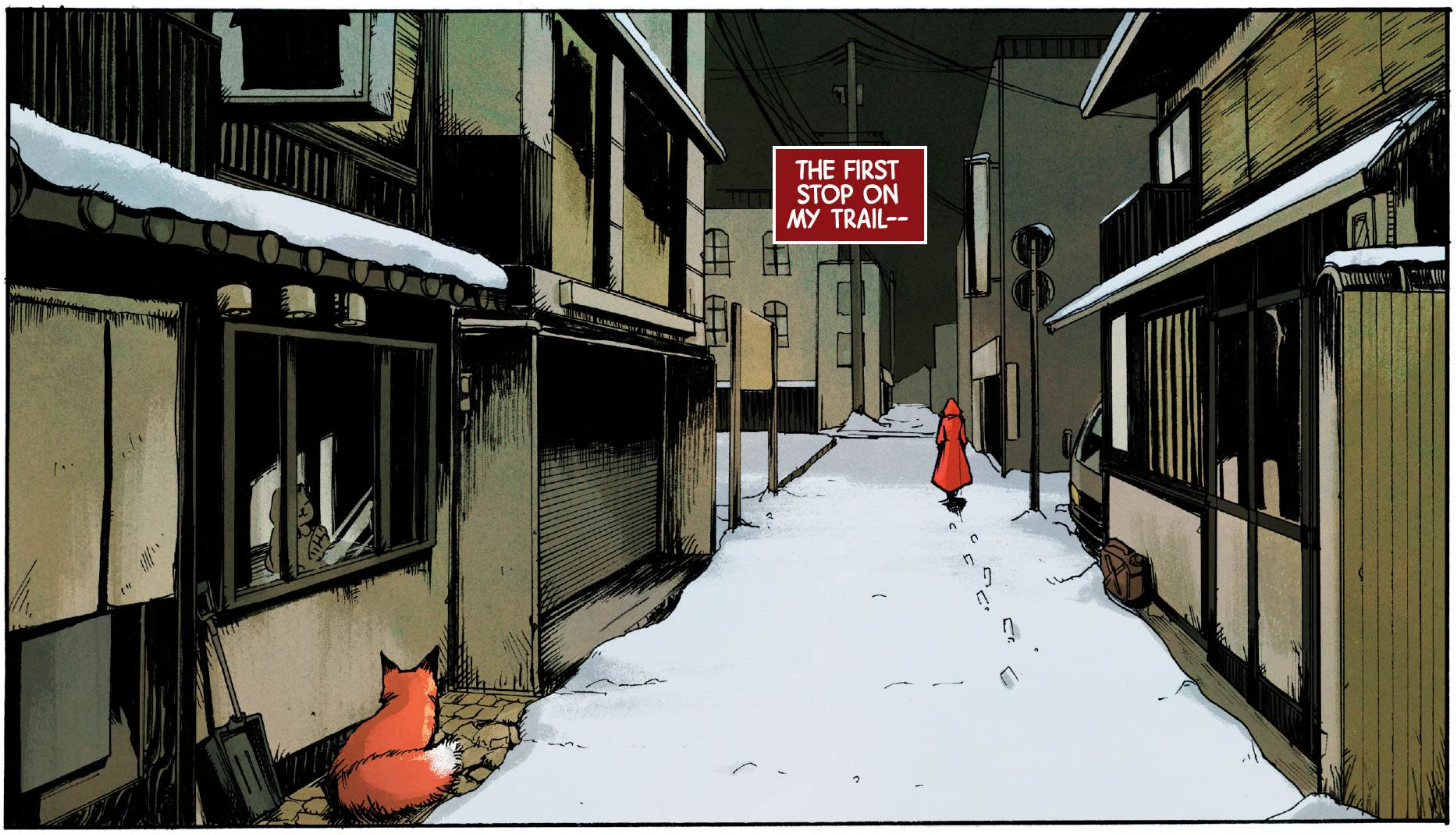


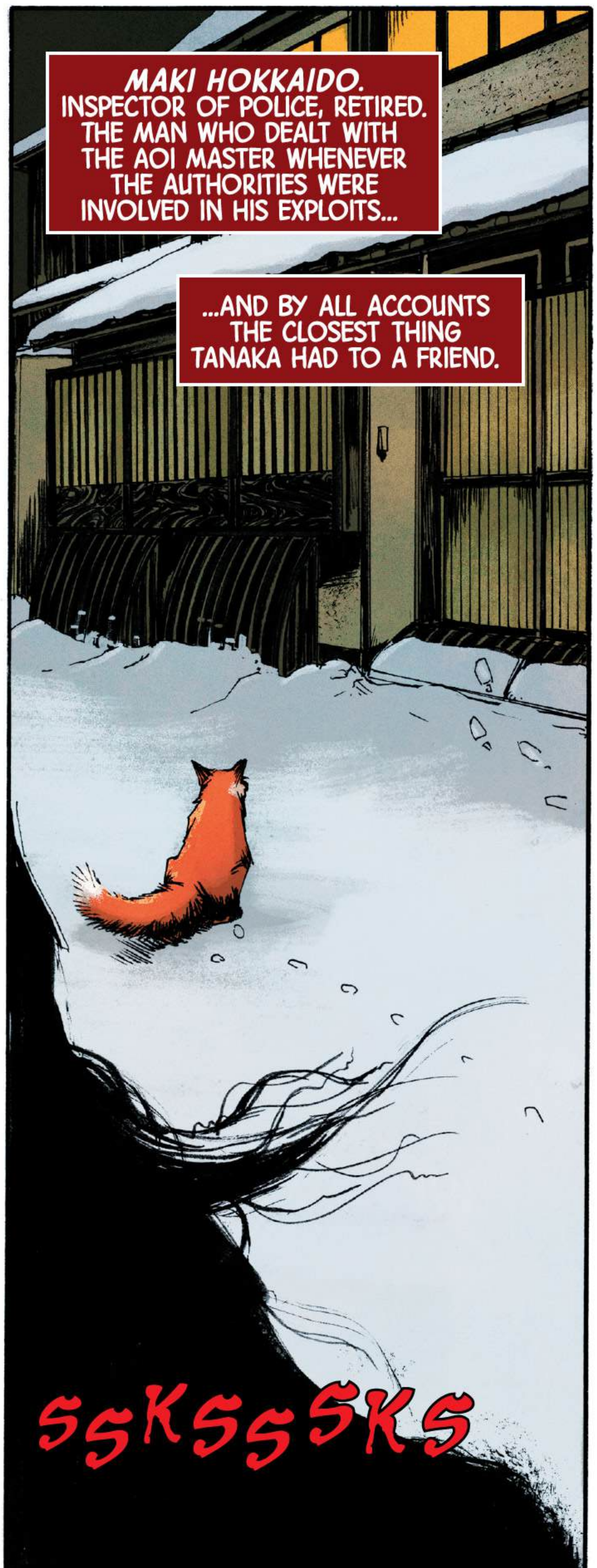
I SUPPOSE I AM BLESSED WITH GREAT FORTUNE.
TO HAVE LIVED AS I HAVE, FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE.
CERTAINLY LONGER THAN MOST MEN.
YES, EVEN LONGER THAN MANY OF MY FELLOW WARLOCKS.
I SHOULD BE CONTENT.
ALL I HAVE DONE.
死
AND YET...IT IS THE WAY OF ALL CREATURES WITH INTELLIGENCE, THAT ONCE THEY HAVE AN AWARENESS OF THEIR LOOMING DEMISE, ALL THEY CAN THINK OF IS THE THINGS THEY *HAVEN'T* DONE.
I HAVE NEVER TASTED AN AMERICAN HAMBURGER.
NOR CRACKED THE PAGES OF TOLSTOY'S *WAR AND PEACE.*
I HAVE NEVER DRIVEN A BUGATTI.
NOR THROWN A BOOMERANG.
I HAVE NEVER--
NO. IT IS FOOLISH-- THESE THOUGHTS. THEY ARE A WASTE.
THERE IS SO MUCH I SUDDENLY WOULD LIKE TO SAY, BUT...SENSING MY FATE AND AWARE THAT THERE IS NO WAY TO AVOID IT...
SSKKSSSSS
...THERE IS NO TIME.

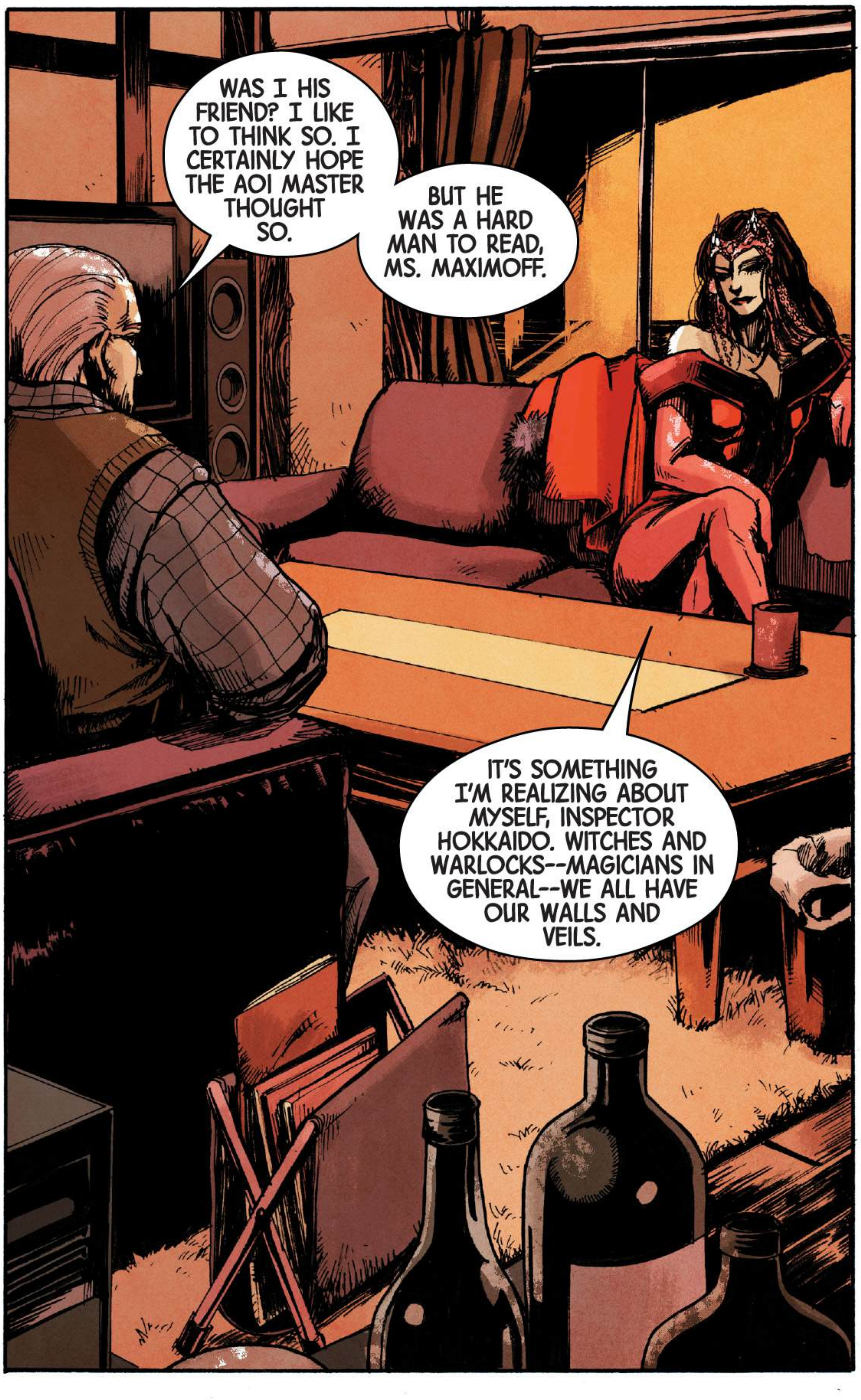
KYOTO, JAPAN.
I HATE MYSTERIES.
I HATE NOT KNOWING SOMETHING I NEED TO.
IT MAKES ME... UNEASY...AND THAT SCARES THE HELL OUT OF ME.
I DIDN'T KNOW *HIROSHI TANAKA*, BUT I'D CERTAINLY HEARD OF HIM. A MIGHTY WARLOCK IN HIS TIME--THE *AOI MASTER.*
AND EVEN THOUGH WE'D NEVER MET, I STILL FELT HIS DEATH FROM ACROSS THIS PLANET--IT WAS LIKE A PART OF ME WAS BEING TORN TO PIECES.
I NEED TO KNOW WHO KILLED HIM.

0101 KYOTO MARUI
SO EASY TO LOSE ONESELF HERE IN KYOTO.
SUCH A STRANGE AND UNIQUE PLACE.
ITS MIXTURE OF THE PAST...
JR 京 都 Kyoto Station
...AND PRESENT.
SHRINES AND TEMPLES AND BEAUTIFUL PARKS...
...NEXT TO THE "FAKE HISTORIC" OF THE *TOEI UZUMASA EIGAMURA* WHERE PEOPLE WATCH AS CINEMA IS MADE.
NINTENDO.
AND THE *INTERNATIONAL MANGA MUSEUM.*
NEW, OLD. OLD, NEW... ALL IN ONE CITY.

WANDA MAXIMOFF... THAT IS YOU, ISN'T IT?
WHY DO YOU WALK BY ME?
IT'S ME, HIROSHI TANAKA. I'M--
--NO. FOUR LEGS. FANGS. A PELT AND A TAIL.
REBORN. MY NEW LIFE.
AND SO MUCH OF MY LIFE I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN.
WHY DID I DIE?
CAN YOU HELP ME, WANDA? CAN YOU HELP ME TO LEARN WHY?


THE FIRST STOP ON MY TRAIL--


MAKI HOKKAIDO. INSPECTOR OF POLICE, RETIRED. THE MAN WHO DEALT WITH THE AOI MASTER WHENEVER THE AUTHORITIES WERE INVOLVED IN HIS EXPLOITS...
...AND BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE CLOSEST THING TANAKA HAD TO A FRIEND.
SSKSSSKS


WAS I HIS FRIEND? I LIKE TO THINK SO. I CERTAINLY HOPE THE AOI MASTER THOUGHT SO.
BUT HE WAS A HARD MAN TO READ, MS. MAXIMOFF.
IT'S SOMETHING I'M REALIZING ABOUT MYSELF, INSPECTOR HOKKAIDO. WITCHES AND WARLOCKS--MAGICIANS IN GENERAL--WE ALL HAVE OUR WALLS AND VEILS.

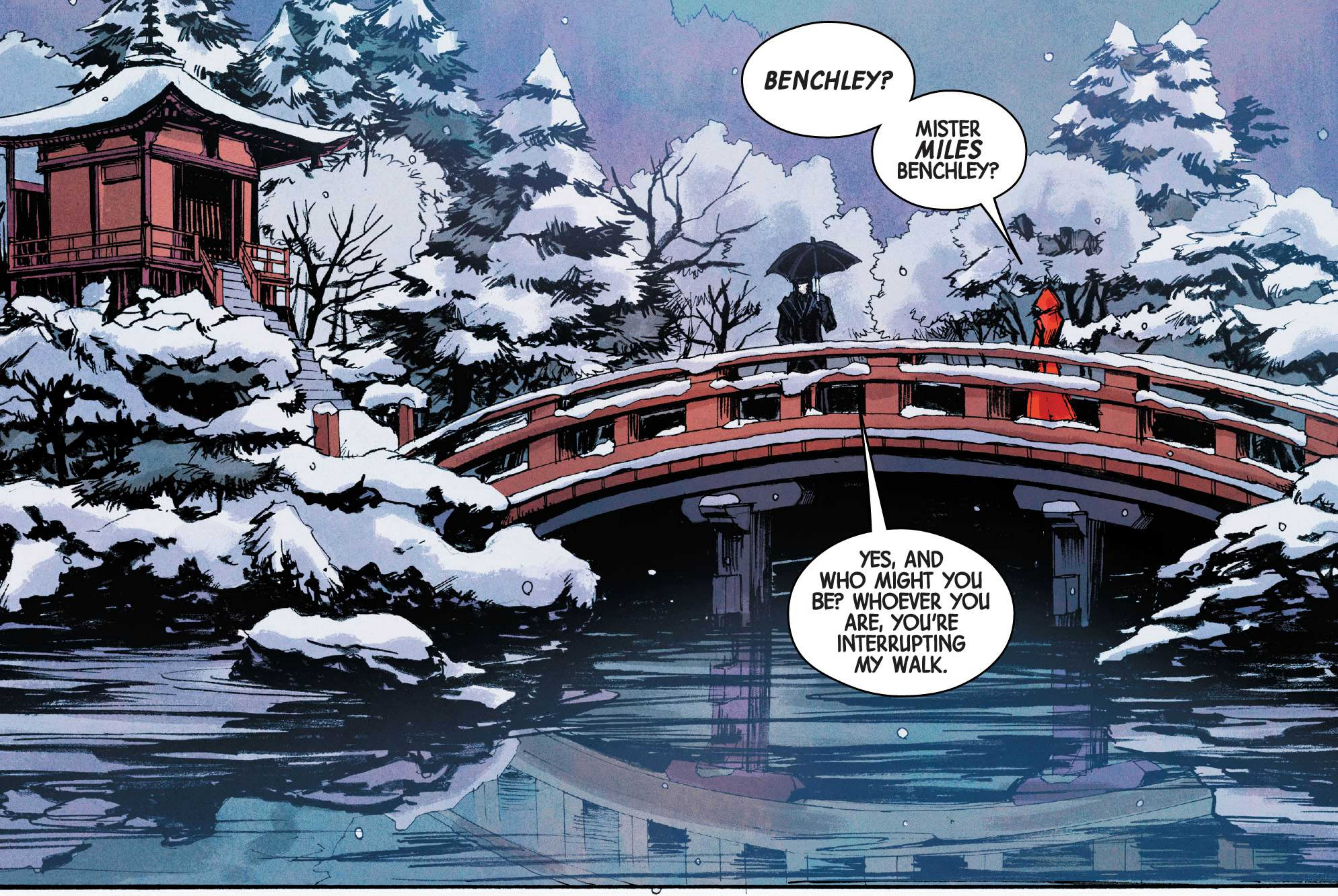
I'M NO LONGER A POLICEMAN, BUT I WAS A LIAISON FOR THE AOI MASTER'S ENTIRE CAREER-- WHEN HE'D COMBAT MAGICAL VILLAINS AND ENEMIES OF JAPAN.
IN FACT, WHEN HE DECIDED HE WANTED TO RETIRE, IT MADE ME REALIZE IT WAS PROBABLY TIME FOR ME, TOO.
HE WAS AN INTERESTING MAN-- TANTALIZING, OBLIQUE.
HMM. FOR INSTANCE-- SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS SUSPECTED--
KYOTO WAS AT THE TOP OF AMERICA'S LIST FOR THE ATOM BOMB BACK DURING THE WAR. DID YOU KNOW THAT?
ONE OF THE AMERICANS IN CHARGE OF SELECTING THE TARGETS HAD SPENT HIS HONEYMOON HERE AND WAS SO TOUCHED BY THE CITY'S BEAUTY HE CHOSE HIROSHIMA INSTEAD.
I KNOW HIROSHI HAD CAST A PROTECTIVE AURA OVER THE CITY BACK THEN AS A YOUNG WARLOCK. I OFTEN WONDERED IF THAT HAD HELPED IN SOME WAY.
DIDN'T YOU ASK HIM?
AS I SAID, HE WAS VAGUE ON THE MATTER... AS HE WAS ON A LOT OF THINGS.
ANYWAY, YOU SEEK ANSWERS TO HIS DEATH, I'M SURE.
HIS *MURDER*. I WONDER IF YOU CAN THINK OF ANY ENEMIES HE HAD-- ANYONE FROM THE PAST.
HONESTLY... NO.
WHEN HE RETIRED, HE TOLD ME ALL HIS OLD FOES WERE EITHER DEAD OR HE'D MADE PEACE WITH THEM. HE WAS VERY ADAMANT THAT SHOULD BE SO...
...THAT HE WASN'T LEAVING THREATS AND ENEMIES FOR WHOEVER SUCCEEDED HIM.
AND WHO WAS THAT? I HAD NO IDEA ANYONE HAD TAKEN UP THE MANTLE OF THE AOI MASTER.
HMM.
YOU KNOW... I DON'T THINK ANYONE HAS.

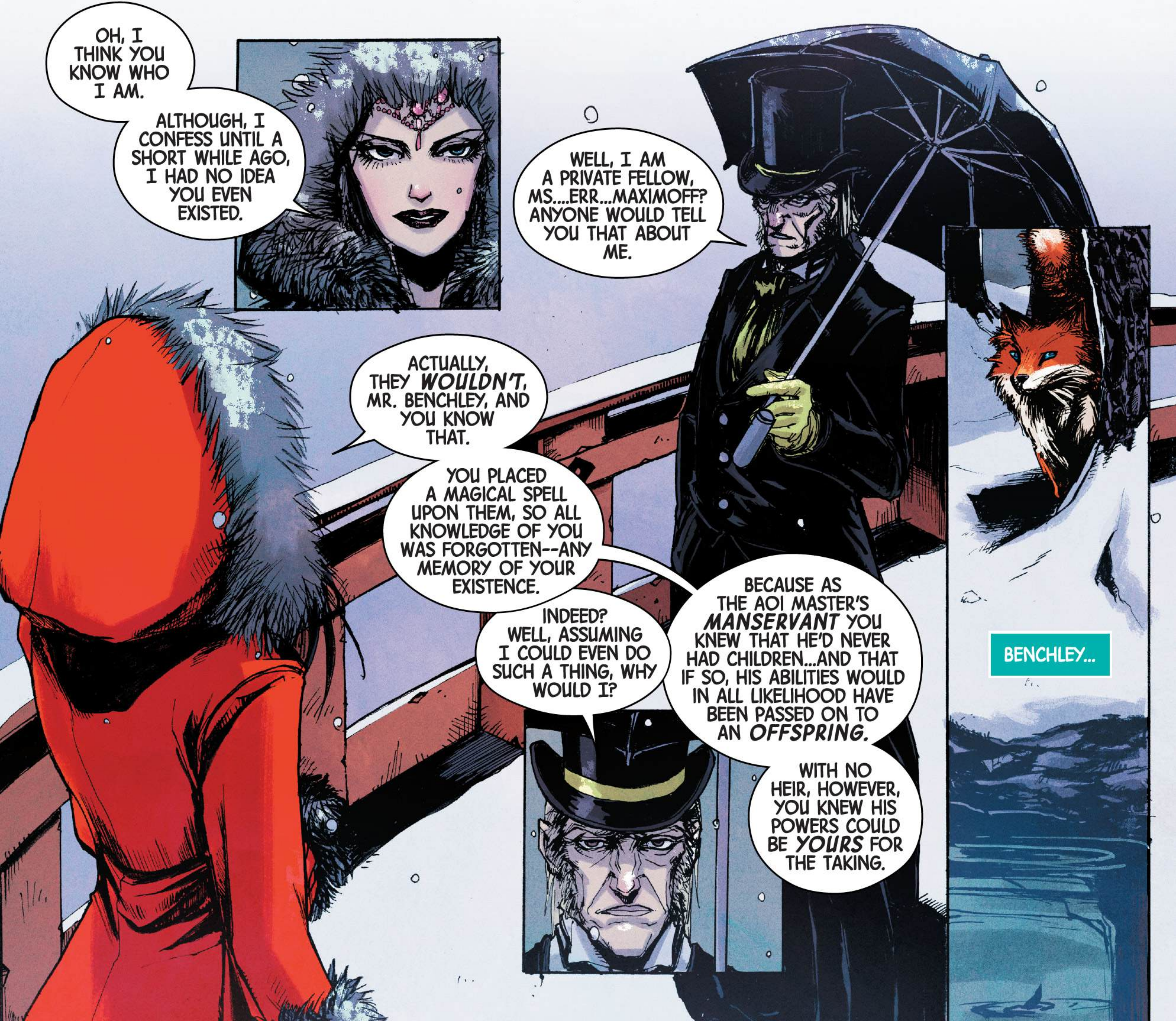
THE TRAIL CONTINUES. THE HUNT.
NOW I GO TO THE ONE OTHER PERSON WHO TRULY KNEW THE AOI MASTER.
NORIKO FURUYA-- TANAKA'S LOVER...FOR MANY YEARS, ANYWAY.
SSKSSSKS
NORIKO, MY DARLING...NOT A DAY GOES BY WHEN--
SNFF
SNFF
--GARBAGE. FOOD THERE. CAN SMELL FOOD.
WE WERE TOGETHER FOR MANY YEARS... HIROSHI AND I.
IN FACT, I'D GO AS FAR AS TO SAY THAT HE WAS THE LOVE OF MY LIFE. OF COURSE, I'M NOT DEAD YET, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY GREATER LOVE ON THE HORIZON. NOT AT MY AGE.
HOW DID YOU MEET, MADAME FURUYA?

I WAS A REPORTER.
BACK THEN, THAT WASN'T A JOB FOR WOMEN, NOT HERE IN THE CITY ANYWAY. I WAS SOMETHING OF A VANGUARD, I'M PROUD TO SAY.
I WAS COVERING A MURDER--A SAVAGE SLAYING THOUGHT TO BE A MANIAC'S WORK.
I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO THOUGHT IT WENT DEEPER STILL. MY INVESTIGATION LED ME FACE-TO-FACE WITH A DEADLY SUPERNATURAL ENTITY.
A *BRIDGE TROLL* TO BE PRECISE.
I WAS MOMENTS FROM BEING HIS NEXT VICTIM WHEN HIROSHI RESCUED ME.
FOR ME, IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. HIROSHI, I MEAN, NOT THE BRIDGE TROLL.
HA.
WHY...UM--IF I MAY ASK--WHY DID YOU AND HE PART?
THIS IS WHERE OUR LAUGHTER STOPPED. HE WAS CURSED WHILE FIGHTING A GHOST OR A WITCH OR A GHOST OF A WITCH, I FORGET.
THE CURSE WAS UNBREAKABLE: I'D DIE AND BE CONSIGNED TO HELL IF WE STAYED TOGETHER.
I LOVED HIM SO MUCH THAT I WAS WILLING TO TAKE THAT CHANCE.
AND HE LOVED ME SO MUCH THAT HE WAS NOT.
SO YOU HAVE RANCOR AT YOUR PARTING?
OH, I'D GIVE THAT GHOST WITCH A GOOD TALKING TO IF I EVER SAW HER... BUT NO...
I UNDERSTOOD HIROSHI'S CHOICE. I LOVED HIM THEN, NOW AND FOREVER.
AS TO WHO MIGHT DO HIM HARM...I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO AGREE WITH INSPECTOR HOKKAIDO. HE NO LONGER HAD ANYONE.
ONE OTHER THING.
I KNOW YOU AND THE AOI MASTER NEVER MARRIED BUT...DID YOU HAVE CHILDREN?
I WISH IT WAS SO, BUT NO. WHY DO YOU ASK?

ANOTHER OF THE AOI MASTER'S ACQUAINTANCES SITS HERE IN KYOTO PRISON...
京都刑務所
...ALTHOUGH "ACQUAINTANCE" MIGHT BE A POOR CHOICE OF WORDS.
AH, *JUN YAMADA*, MY OLD FOE--
WIND. COLD. I BURROW--
NO, TOO SOON... I AM LOSING MYSELF.
TRUTHFULLY, I WAS NEVER AS POWERFUL AS I LET OTHERS BELIEVE--OR MYSELF BELIEVE, FOR THAT MATTER.
REALLY, MR. YAMADA?
OH, ABSOLUTELY... OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T BE HERE ROTTING THE LAST OF MY EXISTENCE AWAY--
--LOOK, THIS BLUE ENCHANTMENT AURA OF THE AOI MASTER STILL CLOAKS ME EVEN AFTER HIS DEATH, PREVENTING ME FROM USING MY OWN MAGIC TO WALK FREE. THAT'S HOW "NOT AS POWERFUL" I TRULY AM.

IN FACT, HAD I BEEN GREATER, I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE TRIED FOR WORLD CONQUEST, NOT JUST JAPAN. ALTHOUGH, I WOULD HAVE BEEN HAPPY WITH JUST KYOTO BUT THE AOI MASTER KEPT EVEN THAT IN CHECK.
STILL, MR. YAMADA, IN YOUR GUISE AS THE *BLACK BULLET*, YOU WERE HIS MOST FREQUENT ENEMY.
BLACK BULLET. WHAT A SILLY NAME.
BUT I WAS PERSISTENT ALL RIGHT. MAYBE *THAT* WAS MY MAGICAL ABILITY.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN ME... COMBINING MAGIC AND SCIENCE. MY OWN VERSION OF *DOCTOR DOOM*--AT LEAST THAT'S HOW I SAW MYSELF.
OF COURSE, THE REALITY OF IT ALL WAS THAT WHILE DOOM IS ALL THE GREATER FOR COMBINING HIS POWERS... I WAS NEITHER FISH NOR FOWL, AS THE SAYING GOES.
AT EVERY ONE OF MY ATTEMPTS AT LARCENOUS GREATNESS, THE AOI MASTER BROUGHT ME FAILURE AND SHAME.
BUT, I'M SORRY, I'M TALKING TOO MUCH, MS. MAXIMOFF. WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO KNOW? YOU MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT THE AOI MASTER'S ENEMIES?
YES, APART FROM YOU, WHO WERE THEY? I'M TOLD HE HAD NONE, BUT... WELL...I CAN'T BELIEVE THERE ISN'T *ONE* GRIEVANCE...ONE PAST FOE LURKING OUT THERE, WAITING OR HOPING TO TAKE HIS LIFE.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE WAY OF THE AOI MASTER, MS. MAXIMOFF. A DEFEAT BY HIM AND HIS MAGIC--WITCHCRAFT, AS YOU WOULD CALL IT--AT THE END THERE WAS AN ORDER.
ORDER OF THE MIND. ORDER IN THE WORLD. ACCEPTANCE.
I NEVER KNEW OF ANYONE WHO DIDN'T ADMIRE HIM...HA, EVEN IF THE AUTHORITIES WERE PUTTING THEM IN SHACKLES AT THE TIME.
HMM.
OKAY, ONE OTHER THING. DID HE HAVE ANY CHILDREN?
THAT'S AN ODD QUESTION TO ASK ME. I HAVE NO IDEA.
YOU SHOULD ASK BENCHLEY. HE'D KNOW, I'M SURE.
BENCHLEY? I'M NOT SURE I KNOW OF ANY BENCHLEY.
OH? NOW THAT *DOES* SURPRISE ME.


BENCHLEY?
MISTER MILES BENCHLEY?
YES, AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE? WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU'RE INTERRUPTING MY WALK.


OH, I THINK YOU KNOW WHO I AM.
ALTHOUGH, I CONFESS UNTIL A SHORT WHILE AGO, I HAD NO IDEA YOU EVEN EXISTED.
WELL, I AM A PRIVATE FELLOW, MS....ERR...MAXIMOFF? ANYONE WOULD TELL YOU THAT ABOUT ME.
ACTUALLY, THEY WOULDN'T, MR. BENCHLEY, AND YOU KNOW THAT.
YOU PLACED A MAGICAL SPELL UPON THEM, SO ALL KNOWLEDGE OF YOU WAS FORGOTTEN--ANY MEMORY OF YOUR EXISTENCE.
INDEED? WELL, ASSUMING I COULD EVEN DO SUCH A THING, WHY WOULD I?
BECAUSE AS THE AOI MASTER'S MANSERVANT YOU KNEW THAT HE'D NEVER HAD CHILDREN...AND THAT IF SO, HIS ABILITIES WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD HAVE BEEN PASSED ON TO AN OFFSPRING.
WITH NO HEIR, HOWEVER, YOU KNEW HIS POWERS COULD BE YOURS FOR THE TAKING.
BENCHLEY...

MANSERVANT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
DOCTOR STRANGE HAS WONG TO ASSIST HIM, AND THE AOI MASTER HAD YOU...MILES BENCHLEY.
YOU WANTED TANAKA'S POWERS AND FOUND SOME WAY TO ACQUIRE THEM UPON KILLING HIM.
THEN...WITH THOSE POWERS YOU CREATED SOME KIND OF HEX SO NO ONE WOULD REMEMBER YOU WERE ASSOCIATED WITH HIROSHI TANAKA TO BEGIN WITH.
IT WAS ONLY JUN YAMADA, THE *BLACK BULLET*, THERE IN PRISON, WITH AN AURA THAT TANAKA HAS CONJURED AROUND HIM, THAT SHIELDED HIM FROM YOUR SPELL.
THAT'S HOW HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO REMEMBERED YOU.
BUT NOW I DO, TOO.
AND THAT MEANS YOU'RE DONE.
HMM. I ADMIT I WOULD BE IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES--AGAINST A WITCH OF YOUR POWER. *EXCEPT*... YOU WERE VAGUE ON ONE POINT--HOW I GOT THE MEANS TO *RECEIVE* THE POWER OF THE AOI MASTER.
I MADE A PACT WITH AN *ONI*, WANDA MAXIMOFF--YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS, I'M SURE--A JAPANESE DEMON WHO NOW ABIDES WITHIN ME.

AND DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T FOLLOWED **YOUR** TRAIL AS YOU FOLLOWED MINE.
LOOK WHO I'VE COLLECTED. LOOK WHO'S HERE!
HURT ME AND YOU HURT THEM, TOO!
HELP US!
WANDA, IT'S *ME*, NORIKO!
FREE ME, MAXIMOFF, ***SAVE ME!***
HE'S RIGHT!
I CAN'T HURT HIM WITHOUT RISKING THEIR LIVES.

MY POWERS-- THOSE I GOT FROM TANAKA ARE WEAK IN ME FOR NOW--THE ONI FEEDS FROM THEM AND HUNGERS SO!
BUT I WILL MASTER IT--TAME IT!
THE POWER OF THE AOI MASTER WILL BE MINE!
AND UNTIL THEN...
...I HAVE THE ONI'S RAGE!
GREAT...
...AND WITH THE INNOCENTS IN HIS POSSESSION, I DARE NOT FIGHT STRONG.
JŌKA SURU!
I HAVE TO FIGHT SMART.
SSSZZZZZZT

YOU MISS A TARGET AS BIG AS ME?
YOU'RE EITHER TOO SHAKEN TO BE A TRUE THREAT...
...OR YOUR ABILITIES ARE EXAGGERATED.
PERHAPS THEY ARE.
BUT THE HEX I FIRED...
...WAS ONE OF JAPANESE *SHIRO MAHO* FOR PURIFICATION.
AND NOT MEANT FOR YOU AT ALL...
...BUT THE *WATERS BENEATH YOU!*
AND BY MAGICALLY PURIFYING THE LAKE...

...IT BECAME THE EQUIVALENT OF HOLY WATER...
...PROTECTING YOUR VICTIMS, BUT NOT YOU, ONI!
AHHHHHH

AND SO MY TIME HERE IN KYOTO ENDS.
THE AOI MASTER'S MURDER DIDN'T JUST CALL TO ME, IT CALLED ME AWAY FROM VISITING MY HOMELAND AS I'D PLANNED. I SHOULD ALREADY BE THERE NOW.
PERHAPS I SHOULD BE A LITTLE THANKFUL, I'M STILL SCARED OF WHAT I'LL FIND THERE.
BUT WITCHCRAFT'S SICKNESS AND THE CURE--THEY BOTH AWAIT ME IN EASTERN EUROPE, I'M MORE CERTAIN WITH EVERY PASSING MINUTE.
AND WITH EVERY PASSING MINUTE... I MERELY DELAY THE INEVITABLE.
SO I MUST GO.
HAPPY. CONTENT.
I WANT TO THANK--I WANT--BUT--
--DON'T REMEMBER WHO--
WHY--
SMELL RABBIT.

CATCH, BITE, EAT.
I MUST BE QUIET.

Scarlet Witch

11

NOVI PAZAR, SERBIA.
IS IT FUNNY?
SAD?
I'VE LONG AGO STOPPED KNOWING WHICH.
HOW, I'M TRYING TO FORGET SO MUCH OF MY PAST...
...AND YET THERE'S EVEN MORE ABOUT IT THAT I'M TRYING TO REMEMBER.

FATHER DROBNJAK?
YES?
HOW CAN I HELP YOU, MY DEAR?
I SEEK ANSWERS.
YES, SO MANY WHO ENTER HERE DO.
I'M TRYING TO LOCATE A COMMUNITY OF ROMANY TRAVELERS.
THE LAST RECORD OF THEM I MANAGED TO UNCOVER WAS HERE-- THIS TOWN.
AND THEN NOTHING.
AH, THE ROMA. THEIR PATH IS NEVER EASY. HARDER STILL BACK THEN.
THIS COUNTRY, LIKE SO MANY AROUND IT, HAS BEEN BESET WITH UNREST AND WAR. RELIGION WAS INVOLVED, OF COURSE. WHEN ISN'T IT, TO SOME DEGREE?
SO WITH THE ROMANY, EITHER ORTHODOX OR MUSLIM, THAT WOULD CERTAINLY PUT THEM RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING.

THESE PARTICULAR ROMA WERE YOUR PEOPLE?
I THINK SO--AT LEAST AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.
HOW LONG AGO WAS THIS--THE LAST RECORD OF THEM?
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AS CLOSE AS.
I WONDER--I'M THINKING ABOUT YOUR MENTION OF WAR AND FIGHTING--WAS THIS TOWN EVER ATTACKED... BACK AROUND THE TIME I'M TRYING TO LEARN ABOUT?
WHICH ARMY DO YOU MEAN? THEY ALL START TO LOOK ALIKE.
WELL, GOODNESS, MY DEAR, IN THAT TIME WHO KNOWS WHERE THEY MAY HAVE GONE TO?
YES, THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
PLUS THE STRESS OF BEING A TRAVELER IN WARTIME--PERHAPS THEY SIMPLY SETTLED SOMEWHERE...OR SCATTERED. IT HAPPENS.
OH, THE ONE I'M THINKING OF WOULD STICK IN YOUR MEMORY IF YOU SAW THEM...

"...THE KNIGHTS OF WUNDAGORE."
NO--I-- WHAT IS THAT? IT SOUNDS LIKE SOME KIND OF FRATERNAL ORDER.
NORMALLY I'D PLAY ALONG-- SEE WHERE YOUR CHARADE WAS GOING-- BUT I'VE NEITHER THE TIME NOR INCLINATION.
YOU KNOW WHO THE KNIGHTS ARE. YOU'RE ALSO MORE THAN AWARE OF THEIR LEADER AND CREATOR...
"...THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.*"
COME ON, SPEAK UP.
I--

KRAKAOOOM
I'M SORRY, I COULDN'T HEAR YOU OVER THE NOISE.

WHEN I SAID THE TRAIL LED ME HERE--I MEANT THE TRAIL LED ME TO *YOU.*
"YOU MET WITH THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY* IN THE PAST, THAT MUCH I DO KNOW.
"YOU MADE A DEAL."
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE BACK THEN--WE'D BEEN UNDER ATTACK FROM BORDERING COUNTRIES, BUT NEVER FROM NEIGHBORING TRANSIA BEFORE--
"--AND NOTHING WAS LIKE THESE KNIGHTS."
I LEARNED THAT THE ATTACKS HERE IN SERBIA--THEY WERE BECAUSE THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY SOUGHT CHILDREN... BABIES.
ONES THAT MIGHT HOLD LATENT POTENTIAL HE COULD AUGMENT.
THERE WAS ONE SUCH PAIR--TWINS--THE OFFSPRING OF A WITCH WHO ABIDED IN THE AREA.

SHE'D GIVEN HER NEWBORNS TO A RELATIVE--ONE OF HER PEOPLE, A ROMA LIKE HERSELF--TO RAISE AS THEIR OWN AND KEEP SAFE FROM THE PERILS THAT HER OWN LIFE SAW ALL TOO OFTEN.
MARYA.
WAS THAT HER NAME? I DIDN'T KNOW--ALL I KNEW WAS HER LOCATION, HERS AND THAT WITCH'S CHILDREN.
SO YOU GAVE IT AWAY TO THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS LIKE HERE.
YES, YOU SAID THAT ALREADY.
"THESE KNIGHTS MAY HAVE WALKED THE EARTH AS WE DO, BUT THEY WEREN'T HUMAN--FEROCIOUS BEASTS, RAIDING AND ATTACKING.
"THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY SOUGHT THE PERFECT CHILDREN FOR HIS WORK--FIRST IN HIS OWN COUNTRY, TRANSIA, BEFORE GOING FORTH INTO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, ABDUCTING NEWBORNS AND INFANTS--
"--LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF THE BIBLE."

I REASONED THAT THE WITCH'S CHILDREN MIGHT BE SPECIAL--
A SACRIFICE. YES, THE BIBLE'S FULL OF THOSE, TOO.
YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS LIKE AT THAT TIME.
AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW *TIRED* I AM OF HEARING YOU SAY THAT.
SO YOU GAVE AWAY HER CHILDREN.
THEIR LOCATION, THAT'S ALL.
GAVE THEM AWAY, AS GOOD AS.
SHE WAS A *WITCH*-- UNHOLY, NOT GOOD--
A DAMNED WITCH!
SHE WAS MY MOTHER!
AND AFTER SEEING MY POWER-- UNLESS YOU'RE AN EVEN BIGGER FOOL THAN I ALREADY TAKE YOU FOR--
--I'D BE CAREFUL NOT TO BESMIRCH WITCHES.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?
THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY LEFT US IN PEACE.
THAT'S NOT ALL, THOUGH, AND YOU KNOW IT...
..."THE WITCH"-- AND SAY HER NAME, HER FULL NAME--*NATALYA MAXIMOFF, THE SCARLET WITCH*--
--SHE WENT TO GET HER CHILDREN--MY BROTHER AND ME--SHE WENT AFTER THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
AND THAT WAS THE LAST THAT ANYONE SAW OF HER.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO HER!
I HAVE NO IDEA.
REALLY! YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME. I KNOW AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE AS YOU OR ANYONE.
SHE WENT AWAY.
AS WILL I.

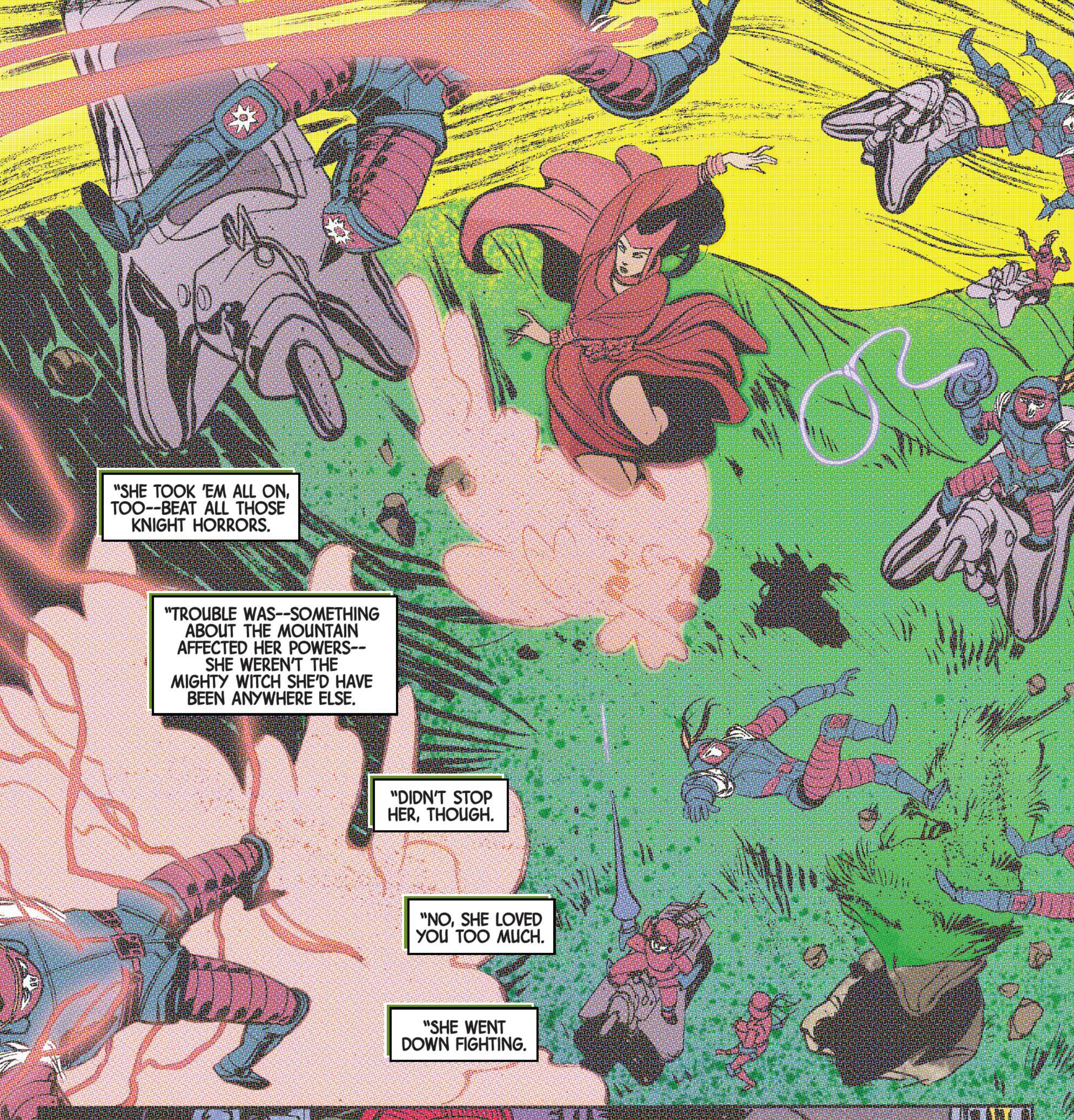
HERE.
I RETURN THIS MOCKERY OF A CHURCH.
I WILL PRAY FOR YOU.
PRAY FOR *YOURSELF*. I DON'T NEED IT.
SPEAK WITH DASHA.
WHO?
DASHA KOLAROV.
SHE'S A ROMA. OLDER WOMAN NOW AND A BIT LOST IN THE HEAD--BUT IN YOUNGER, BRIGHTER TIMES I THINK SHE KNEW YOUR MOTHER.
DON'T THANK ME. I DON'T DESERVE IT.
I WASN'T GOING TO.

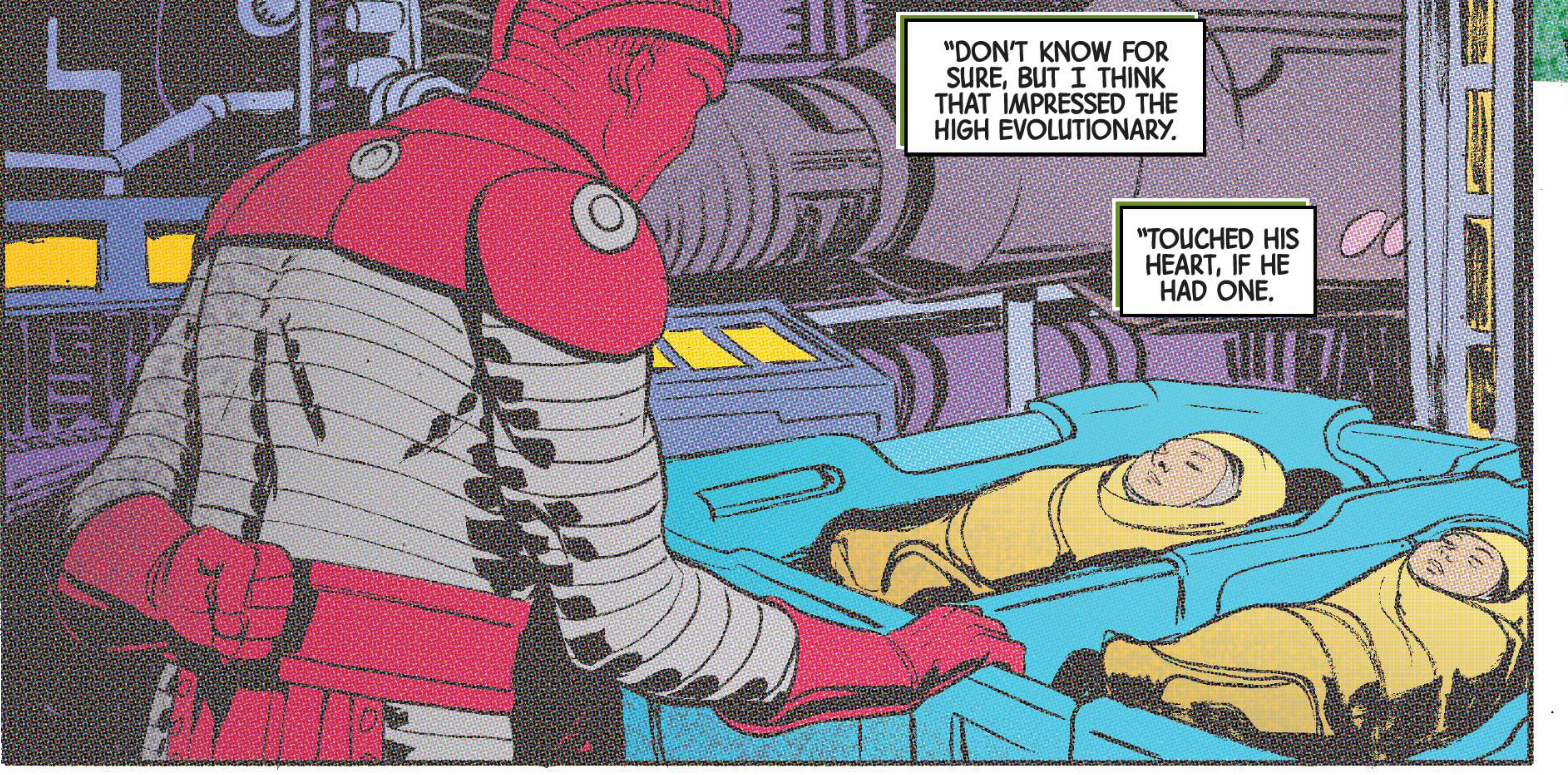
NOVI PAZAR IS NOT A PLACE OF DESTITUTION BY ANY MEANS...
...BUT LIKE ANYWHERE, SOME AREAS ARE WORSE THAN OTHERS.
THAT'S WHERE I FIND HER.
YEAH? YOU SEE SOMETHING IN THE YARD TAKES YER FANCY?
DASHA? DASHA KOLAROV? I HOPE I'M NOT BOTHERING YOU. MY NAME IS--
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
Y' GOT THE SAME EYES AS 'ER.
YER NATALYA'S GIRL.

WONDERED WHEN YOU'D BE BY. WONDERED, WANDA, HA.
GLAD IT WAS 'FORE I CALLED IT QUITS IS ALL.
I'M SORRY, I WOULD HAVE COME TO SEE YOU BEFORE NOW...YEARS AGO, IF I'D KNOWN ABOUT YOU.
WELL, IT WEREN'T LIKE I WAS SAT HERE TWIDDLIN' ME THUMBS. AT LEAST YER HERE NOW.
YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH MY MOTHER.
BEST FRIENDS, AYE.
BACK THEN... BACK THEN, I HAD HER BACK. HA. WHAT'CHU CALL ME--NAME THEY HAVE FOR WHAT I WUZ. OH YEAH, THAT'S IT...
...I WAS HER *SIDEKICK.*
WHEN SHE FOUGHT EVIL, YOU WERE THERE--CRIMINALS AND SUCH?
NOT SO MUCH CROOKS AND ROBBERS, SHE LEFT THAT T' THE AUTHORITIES. NO, MORE THE UNSEEN AND THE UNTOLD.

HEARD THE TIME WHEN SHE WAS ABOUT CALLED THE AGE OF MONSTERS.
NOT 'ERE. EASTERN EUROPE, IT WAS MORE AN AGE OF ***HORRORS***. VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES.
COULDN'T THROW A ROCK BACK THEN N' NOT HIT A MAD SCIENTIST.
OH, AND WITCHES OF COURSE. LOTS OF BAD WITCHES.
N' YER MAM, NATALYA--THE SCARLET WITCH...
...SHE FOUGHT 'EM ALL!

I SAW HER... RECENTLY, I MET HER FOR THE FIRST TIME.
MET HER, YOU SAY? CAN'T IMAGINE THAT'S LIKELY.
I MEAN I MET HER *SPIRIT.* SHE WAS YOUNG--FROM A TIME BEFORE HER DEATH.
I WANTED TO ASK HER SO MUCH, BUT SHE WAS GONE BEFORE I HAD THE CHANCE.
SHE LOVED YOU--YOU AND YOUR BROTHER, BOTH.
COST HER HER LIFE, N' SHE GAVE IT GLADLY.
TELL ME-- TELL ME HOW.
"I WEREN'T THERE FOR MOST OF IT--TOLD ME TO SIT IT OUT. 'M GUESSING SHE KNEW IT WOULDN'T END WELL--
"--WHEN THAT CRAZY EVOLUTION FELLA COME N' TOOK YOU BOTH TO HIS COUNTRY."
"TRANSIA!"
"YEAH, TRANSIA--BLASTED PLACE. SHE WENT AFTER YOU--ALL THE WAY TO WUNDAGORE MOUNTAIN WHERE HE HAD YOU BOTH KEPT.


"SHE TOOK 'EM ALL ON, TOO--BEAT ALL THOSE KNIGHT HORRORS.
"TROUBLE WAS--SOMETHING ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN AFFECTED HER POWERS--SHE WEREN'T THE MIGHTY WITCH SHE'D HAVE BEEN ANYWHERE ELSE.
"DIDN'T STOP HER, THOUGH.
"NO, SHE LOVED YOU TOO MUCH.
"SHE WENT DOWN FIGHTING.


"DON'T KNOW FOR SURE, BUT I THINK THAT IMPRESSED THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
"TOUCHED HIS HEART, IF HE HAD ONE.

"SO WHEN HE WAS DONE WITH YOU N' YOUR BROTHER, HE RETURNED TO THE WORLD--COULD HAVE DROPPED YOU ANYWHERE, BUT HE TOOK THE TIME TO FIND BLOOD RELATIVES OF YOUR MAM'S.
"DJANGO AND MARYA MAXIMOFF."
I THOUGHT THERE'D BE A BLOOD LINK SOMEWHERE WHEN I HEARD MY MOTHER SAY HER NAME.
YOUR AUNT N' UNCLE, THEY WERE.
THEY'D HAVE RAISED YOU AS THEIR OWN TOO, 'CEPT THE MOB GOT RILED BY DJANGO AND THEY TOOK THE FIRE TO HIM AND HIS WIFE.
YEAH, I REMEMBER--ALMOST--IT'S A BLUR, BUT--
AND LATER--DJANGO RE-ENTERED MY LIFE. I WAS THERE WHEN HE DIED.
WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS WHY THEY DIDN'T EXPLAIN WHO THEY WERE BACK THEN?
NO TELLIN' WHY PEOPLE DO THINGS OR DON'T.

YES, AND THAT'S THE REASON I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SO CLOSE AND SO FORGIVING OF MY BROTHER PIETRO'S ERRANT WAYS...UNTIL RECENTLY ANYWAY.
HE'S ALL I HAVE.
THOUGH THAT DOES BEG THE QUESTION...
...IF YOU KNOW MY MOTHER THEN PERHAPS YOU KNOW...
...WHO WAS MY FATHER?
NOT A CLUE. YER MAM NEVER SAID.
BUT YOU KNOW WHO MIGHT HAVE AN IDEA...
...Y' TRIED ASKING MARYA?
WAIT! I THOUGHT SHE WAS DEAD-- YOU SAID--
SAID THEY *BURNED* HER...
...NEVER SAID SHE DIED FROM IT.

WE DRIVE PAST AN ONION FIELD ON THE WAY OUT OF TOWN.
IT PUTS MY PAST IN MIND...
...HOW WHEN EACH LAYER PEELS AWAY, LIKE AN ONION, I FIND SOME NEW SECRET OR TRUTH.
AND SO WE DRIVE TOWARD ANOTHER REVELATION...
...THAT I AM BOTH EXCITED AND FEARFUL TO ENCOUNTER.

MARYA?...
...AUNT MARYA?

IT'S ME...
...WANDA.

Scarlet Witch
AJA
12

THEN.
"OUR WAGON WAS OLD-- DO YOU RECALL HOW RICKETY AND ROTTED-OUT THE WOOD WAS?
"THAT'S WHAT SAVED ME.
"THAT, AND THE ONE PERSON IN THE MOB WHO TOOK PITY ON A BURNING WOMAN."

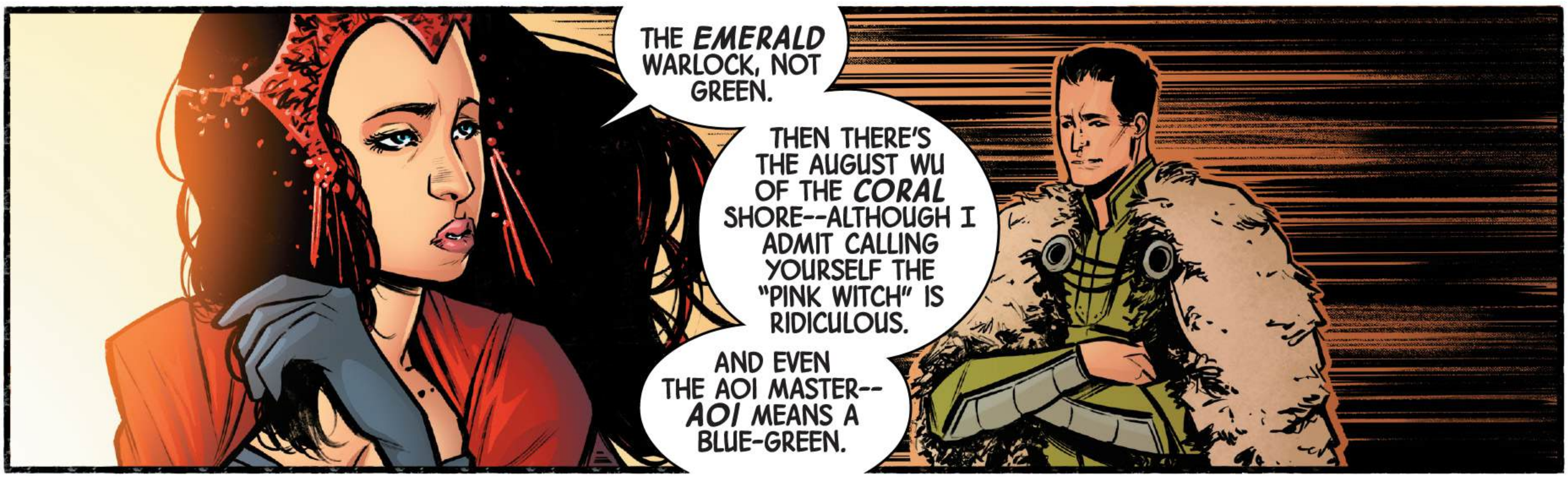
SEVEN MILES OUTSIDE NOVI PAZAR, SERBIA.
AUNT MARYA-- "AUNT"--EVEN THAT SOUNDS WRONG. ALL THOSE YEARS WHEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY *MOTHER.*
YOU *WERE* MY MOTHER. TO ME AND PIETRO.
I'M SO-- I--HONESTLY I'M AT A *LOSS* FOR WORDS. I THOUGHT YOU WERE *DEAD.*
BETTER THAT YOU DID, THAN SEE ME *THIS* WAY.
I'VE BLACKED OUT SO MUCH OF THAT DAY, ALL I REALLY RECALL IS *RUNNING* WITH YOUR *SCREAMS* BEHIND ME.
I'M SO SORRY.
I SHOULD HAVE CHECKED AFTER--LATER--IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME YOU MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE.
WHY? YOU WEREN'T THE ONE WITH THE MATCHES.
YES, WELL, THERE'S A CERTAIN FINALITY IN FLAMES AND SCREAMS, SO I DON'T BLAME YOU.
I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW I MUST LOOK.
YOU...YOU LOOK...
...LIKE THE *WOMAN* WHO RAISED ME FROM A BABY AS IF I WAS HER *DAUGHTER.*
OH, WANDA, I MISSED YOU SO MUCH.
IN SO MANY WAYS YOU *WERE* AND STILL *ARE*-- *ALWAYS* WILL BE...
...MY *MOTHER.*

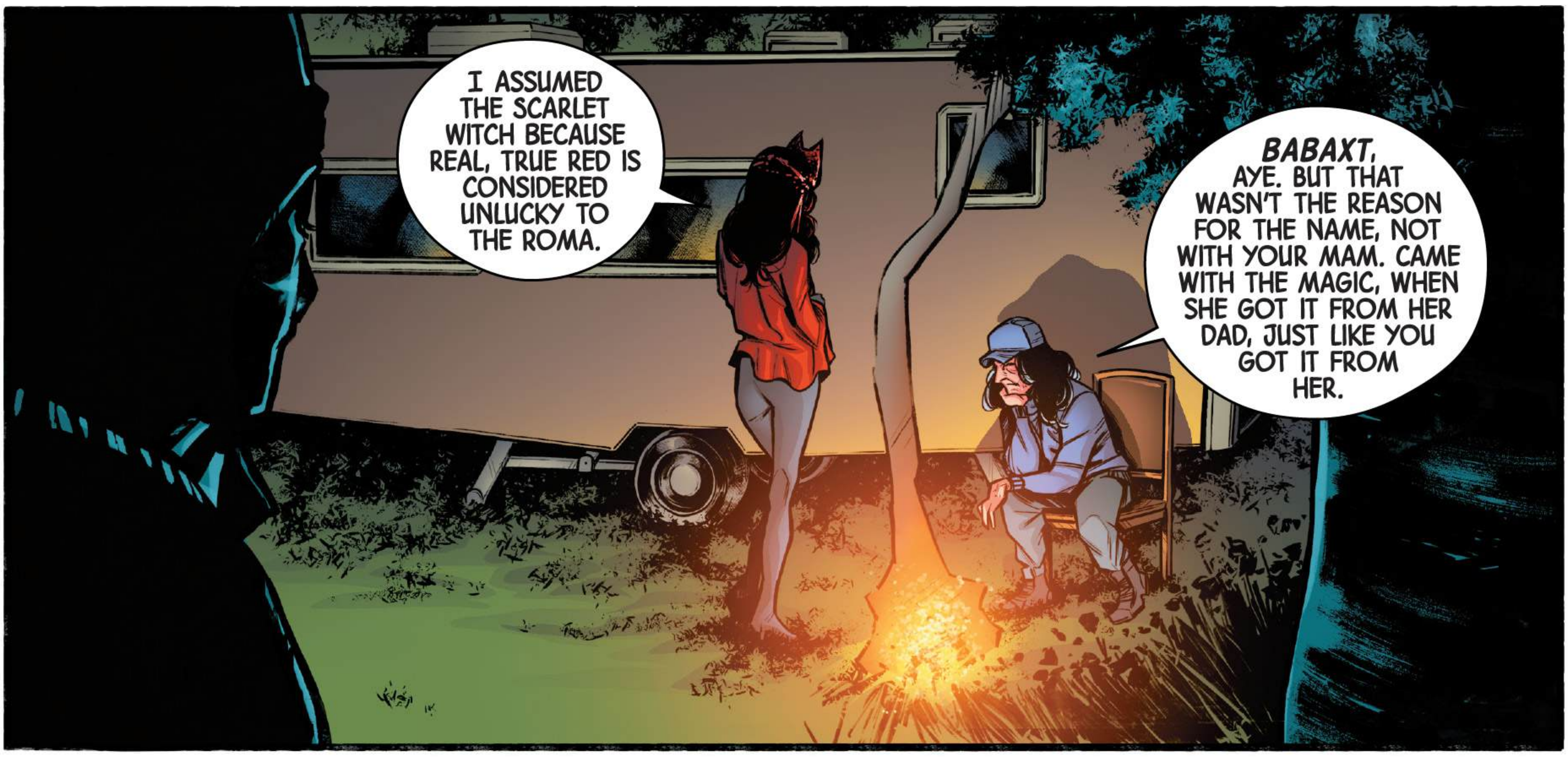
NO, LET'S CALL THINGS WHAT THEY ARE AND WHO THEY ARE: I'M *NOT* YOUR MAM, I'M YOUR *AUNTY* AND DJANGO WAS YOUR UNCLE.
HIS SISTER, *NATALYA*...SHE WAS YOUR *REAL* MOTHER.
AND *ALSO*...
"...SHE WAS THE SCARLET WITCH *BEFORE* ME."
THAT'S RIGHT, *BRAVE* GIRL THAT SHE WAS.
I CAME LOOKING FOR HER, AND FOUND *YOU.*
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT WHEN *DASHA* TOLD ME ABOUT YOU.
M'JUST GLAD I BRUNG YOU TWO TOGETHER.

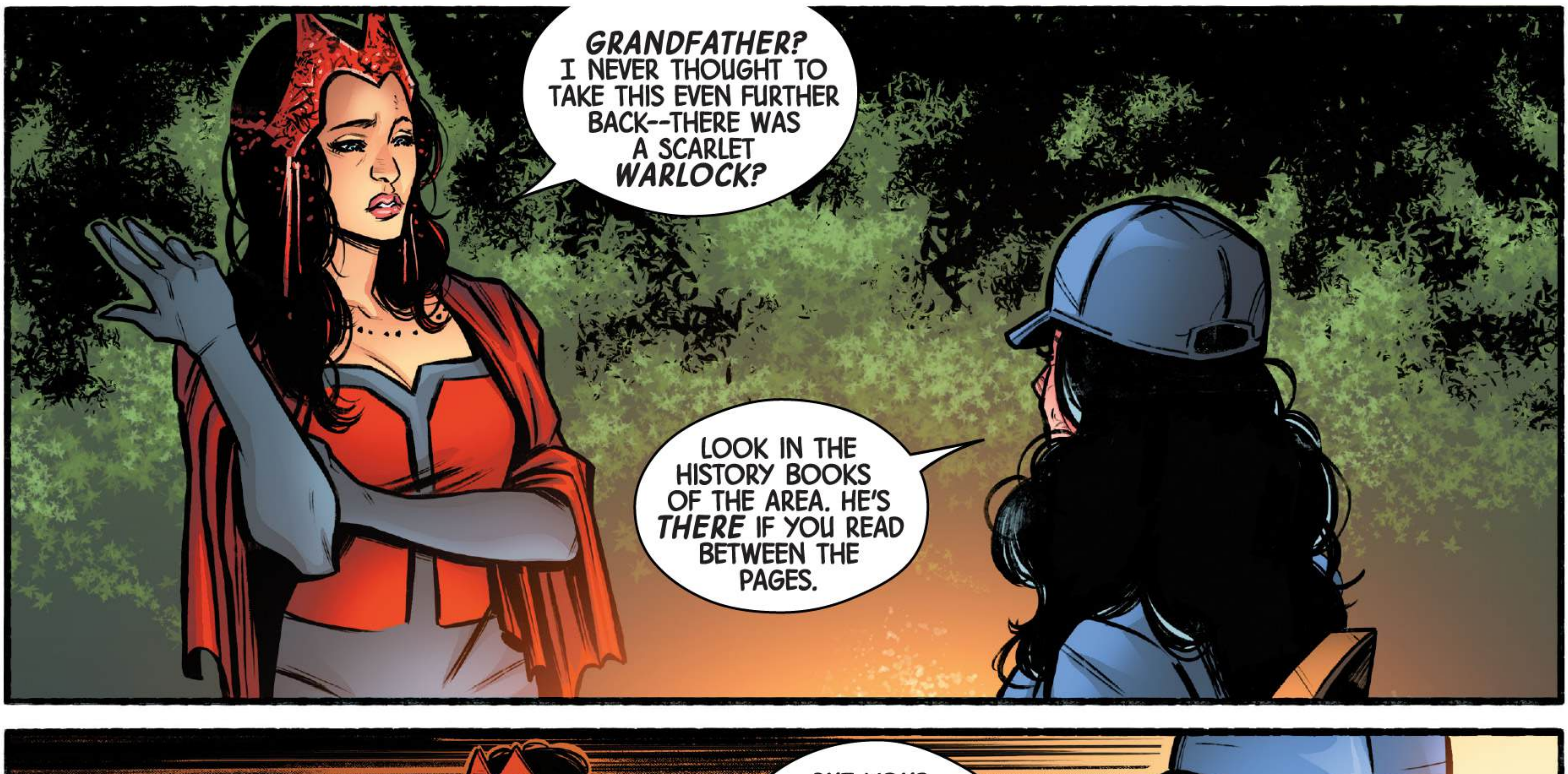
MUST BE A *DISAPPOINTMENT,* ME BEING ALIVE N'HER GONE.
YOU KNEW SHE WAS DEAD, RIGHT?
YES, I KNEW.
BUT *DON'T* DO THAT TO YOURSELF. "DISAPPOINTMENT." THAT'S *NONSENSE,* THIS IS THE *GREATEST* THING EVER, TO KNOW YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
THANK YOU.
FOR *WHAT?* PART OF WHO I AM--THE GOOD PART, NOT THE BAD AND MAD, THE *GOOD*--THAT'S BECAUSE OF *YOU* AND THE CHILDHOOD I HAD.
IT'S *ME* WHO SHOULD BE SAYING THANKS.

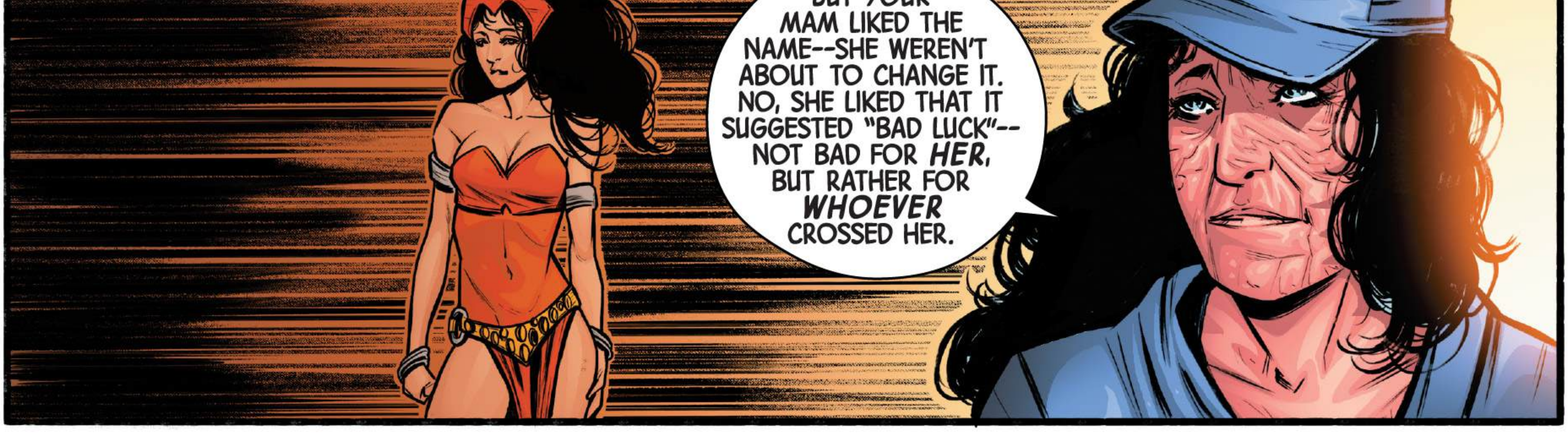
ENOUGH TEARS. DON'T KNOW WHAT GOT TO ME.
YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR MAM, I BET.
I'M HAPPY JUST TO SIT HERE AND BE WITH YOU, *BUT--*
IF I KNOW THINGS, I MIGHT AS WELL TELL THEM, RIGHT?
YOUR MAM WAS A WITCH, BUT YOUR UNCLE DJANGO... HE HAD A *TOUCH* OF THE *CRAFT,* TOO.
HIS *DOLLS...*
"...HE CLAIMED WHAT MADE THEM SPECIAL WAS THAT THE *WOOD* HE CARVED THEM FROM WAS FROM *WUNDAGORE,* BUT I ALWAYS SUSPECTED THERE WAS *MORE* TO IT."
I WAS THERE WHEN DJANGO *DIED,* YOU SHOULD PROBABLY KNOW THAT.
HE COULDN'T HANDLE THIS--MY FACE--THAT IN SOME WAY *HE* LET IT HAPPEN, OR AT LEAST *DIDN'T* HAVE THE POWER TO STOP IT.
IT WAS EASIER FOR HIM TO CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT I'D *DIED* THAT DAY. TELL ME...
HOW'D *HE* DIE? WAS IT A GOOD DEATH?

"IS *ANY* DEATH GOOD? HE WANTED TO RECLAIM PIETRO AND I. HIS 'MAGICAL' DOLLS--HE USED THEM TO *POSSESS* US."
NO, *NOT* SO GOOD A DEATH.
IT'S FUNNY...I FEEL *NOTHING* FOR THE MAN WHO RAN AWAY.
I'LL *ALWAYS* LOVE WHO HE WAS *BEFORE* THAT BAD DAY WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.
WHAT I AM SURPRISED TO DISCOVER IS HOW MUCH A WITCH'S CRAFT CAN BE *INHERITED*. EVEN WITH DJANGO AND HIS DOLLS.
OF COURSE, THERE'S *SKILL* INVOLVED, HEXES AND SPELLS MEMORIZED--
YES, BUT AT THE SAME TIME WITCH'S *BLOOD*...IS A *HELL* OF A THING.
THERE'S A WITCH I MET IN HONG KONG, *THE WU*--SHE INHERITED HER POWERS FROM HER MOTHER.
AND THEN IN JAPAN--WHERE A WARLOCK WAS MURDERED BECAUSE *CONVERSELY* HE *DIDN'T* HAVE ANY BLOOD HEIRS TO INHERIT HIS POWER.
SOMETHING ELSE I'M JUST REALIZING--IT *CAN'T* BE A COINCIDENCE--HOW WITCHES IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH A COLOR, BUT IT'S *NEVER* A BASIC ONE.
I'M NOT THE RED WITCH, I'M THE *SCARLET WITCH.*


THE *EMERALD* WARLOCK, NOT GREEN.
THEN THERE'S THE AUGUST WU OF THE *CORAL* SHORE--ALTHOUGH I ADMIT CALLING YOURSELF THE "PINK WITCH" IS RIDICULOUS.
AND EVEN THE AOI MASTER--*AOI* MEANS A BLUE-GREEN.


I ASSUMED THE SCARLET WITCH BECAUSE REAL, TRUE RED IS CONSIDERED UNLUCKY TO THE ROMA.
BABAXT, AYE. BUT THAT WASN'T THE REASON FOR THE NAME, NOT WITH YOUR MAM. CAME WITH THE MAGIC, WHEN SHE GOT IT FROM HER DAD, JUST LIKE YOU GOT IT FROM HER.


GRANDFATHER? I NEVER THOUGHT TO TAKE THIS EVEN FURTHER BACK--THERE WAS A SCARLET *WARLOCK?*
LOOK IN THE HISTORY BOOKS OF THE AREA. HE'S *THERE* IF YOU READ BETWEEN THE PAGES.


BUT YOUR MAM LIKED THE NAME--SHE WEREN'T ABOUT TO CHANGE IT. NO, SHE LIKED THAT IT SUGGESTED "BAD LUCK"--NOT BAD FOR *HER*, BUT RATHER FOR *WHOEVER* CROSSED HER.

ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS *THAT* PHILOSOPHY DIDN'T EXTEND TO THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
NO.
I SUPPOSE NOT.
"HE TOLD ME *YOU* WERE MY REAL PARENTS--WHEN HE REVEALED THAT MAGNETO *WASN'T!*"
"HE FOUND DJANGO AND I, GAVE YOU TO US--OH, HE KNEW WHO WE WERE, I'M SURE. EVEN THOUGH HE HAD US THINKING IT WAS BLIND, MERRY CHANCE."
HE CLEARLY IS AS UNFAMILIAR WITH TRUTH AS HE IS HIS OWN SANITY.

I SUMMONED A SPIRIT RECENTLY FOR A HERO IN FRANCE--HIS WIFE, WHO HAD DIED.
SINCE THEN I'VE TRIED TO SUMMON MY MOTHER, TOO, BUT HER SPIRIT HAS BEEN ELUSIVE.
YOU'LL NEVER SEE YOUR MOTHER.
MARYA? WHY WOULD YOU *SAY* THAT? HOW CAN YOU BE SO *CERTAIN?*
WHY? BECAUSE...

...I'M GOING TO STOP YOU!!!
SLSSSSS
GHAA!

WHERE'S MARYA?! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HER?
I POSSESS THIS ONE'S MORTAL SHELL, BUT I AM MORE--
I, KALINQ!
FANCY NAME FOR WHAT YOU ARE-- A COMMON WITCH-DEMON-- I KNOW YOUR KIND.

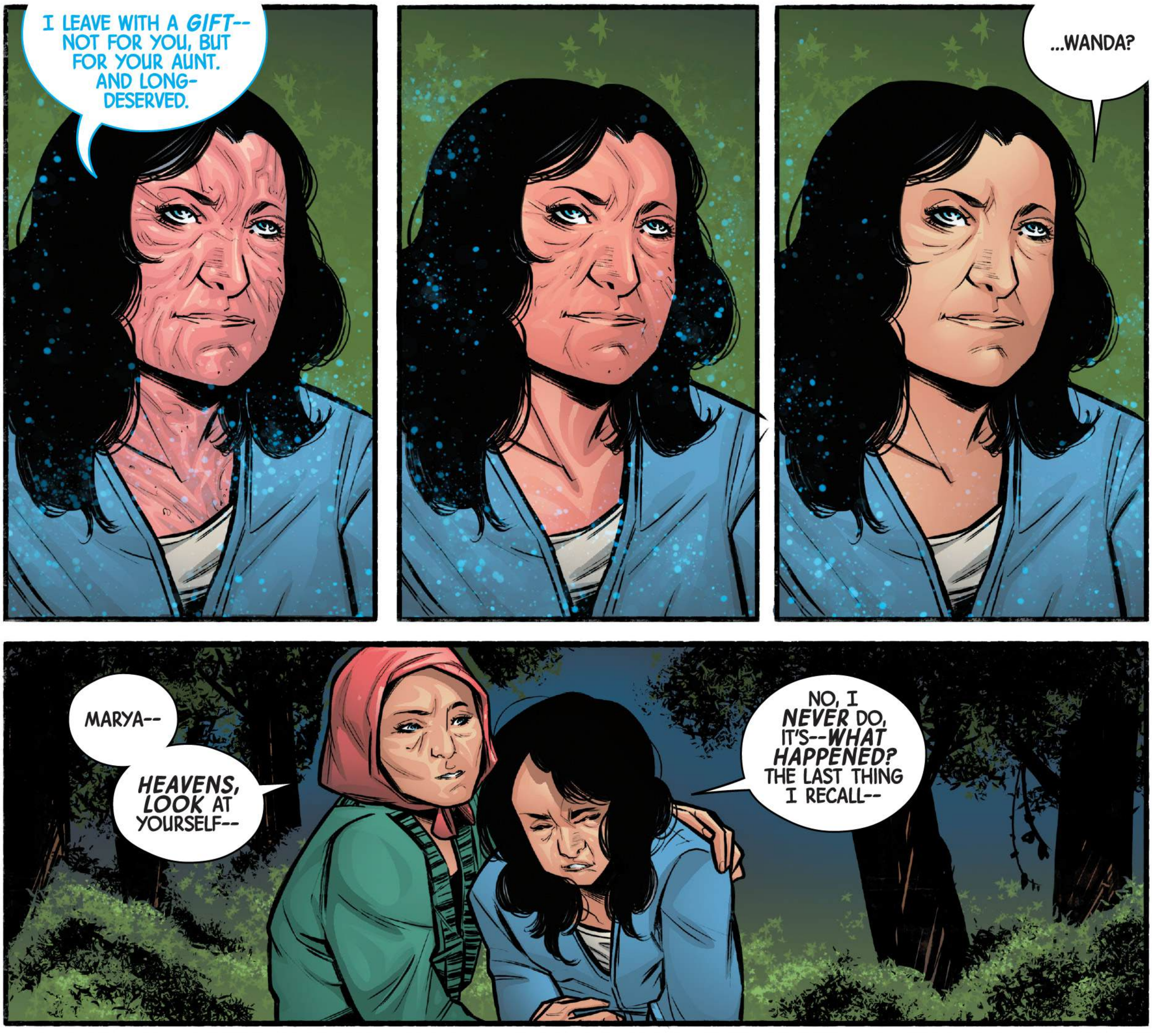
WANDA! LET ME HELP! WHAT CAN I--
NO TIME, DASHA! GET AWAY BEFORE--
UGN--
--YES?
BEFORE WHAT?
BEFORE A SECOND DEMON, POSSESSES THIS MORTAL, TOO?

I CAN USE A SPELL OF *EXORCISM*--WORKED IN NEW YORK WITH THE DETECTIVE--
--BUT I'M *SCARED* TO DO MORE...
...I *RISK HURTING* THE BODIES AND SOULS OF MARYA AND DASHA STILL SOMEWHERE IN THE DEMON'S CORPOREAL FORMS.
THIS IS-- I'M--
OH, *WANDA*...

...WHAT *MESS* HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO NOW?
AGATHA?!
CARE TO LET AN OLD GHOST LEND YOU HER ENERGY? I THINK *TOGETHER* WE CAN BEAT THEM.
HOW DID YOU KNOW I NEEDED HELP?
MY DEAR GIRL, DEAD OR ALIVE...
...I'M STILL *AGATHA HARKNESS!*

DASHA... MARYA, ARE YOU *BOTH* ALL RIGHT?
I...I...I'M ALIVE. THAT'S *ALL* I CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN AT THE MOMENT.
MARYA?
ARE YOU *HURT?*
MOTHER, IS THAT YOU? *NATALYA?*
SHE *ISN'T* HERE YET, *DAUGHTER.*
I'M SURE SHE WON'T BEGRUDGE ME BORROWING HER SO WE CAN *SHARE* A MOMENT.
YES, I'M HERE, BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT.
NATALYA?! IT'S *ME,* DASHA.
HELLO, MY OLD FRIEND. *THANK YOU* FOR *REUNITING* MY DAUGHTER AND HER AUNT.

WANDA, I WAS TRYING TO POSSESS MARYA--SO I COULD PUT YOU ON THE RIGHT *PATH*--WHEN THOSE DEMONS INTERCEDED--
THERE ARE FORCES ABROAD THAT WOULD SEEK TO *STOP* YOU FIXING WITCHCRAFT--CURING IT...
...THOSE WHO FEAST ON THE ROTTEN MEAT OF THE CRAFT'S *SICKNESS.*
WHO ARE THEY? ARE THEY ON EARTH? I WILL FIND THEM WHEREVER THEY ARE, THERE'LL BE *NO HIDING* FROM ME!
CALM DOWN, CHILD. THE ANSWERS YOU SEEK ARE TO BE FOUND IN THE PLACE WE FIRST MET. WHEN I SAID "PUT YOU ON THE PATH," I MEANT IT *LITERALLY.*
THE WITCHES' ROAD.
YOU MUST WALK IT *FURTHER* THAN ANY WITCH--FURTHER THAN *ANYONE.*
WHEN YOU GET TO THE *END,* YOU'LL LEARN WHAT IS NEEDED OF YOU.
BUT I NEED TO KNOW *WHO* OR *WHAT* I'M FIGHTING.
AND YOU WILL WHEN YOU GET THERE, FOR NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT THE JOURNEY.
GO.
MY TIME DRAWS TO A CLOSE. I MUST RETURN.
WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN? THERE'S SO MUCH *STILL* I *DON'T* KNOW.
LATER.


I LEAVE WITH A GIFT-- NOT FOR YOU, BUT FOR YOUR AUNT. AND LONG-DESERVED.
...WANDA?
MARYA--
HEAVENS, LOOK AT YOURSELF--
NO, I NEVER DO, IT'S--WHAT HAPPENED? THE LAST THING I RECALL--
NATALYA HEALED YOU. YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL. I'VE A MIRROR IN THE CAR, COME ON.

SO, THE WITCHES' ROAD?
INDEED, THE WITCHES' ROAD. ARE YOU COMING WITH ME?
GOODNESS, ARE YOU JOKING? *TRY* KEEPING ME AWAY.
HMM...
WHAT IS IT?
JUST THINKING.
ALL THE EXPERIENCES I'VE ENCOUNTERED LATELY--THE DIFFERENT BATTLES, DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND FOES.
I FEEL, NOW, LIKE THEY WERE *TRAINING* FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD.
ARE YOU CERTAIN?
NO, BUT I INTEND TO *TAKE* THEM WITH ME, NONETHELESS.

京都刑務所
COME ON, OLD WOMAN...
...LET'S WALK THE WITCHES' ROAD ONCE MORE...
...ONE STEP AT A TIME.

4 Women of Power variant by **Jamal Campbell**

Scarlet Witch
13

KNEEL, YOU GLOWING CURS!
KNEEL BEFORE THE MIGHT OF I,
KRUUL!

PLEASE, DON'T HURT US.
WE, THE MYLD, ARE BUT A GENTLE RACE!
WHAT THREAT ARE WE TO ONE SUCH AS YOU?
YOU SPEAK OF YOUR *WEAKNESS* AS IF THAT WERE A *BOON!*
FOOLS!
YOU MAY BE MEEK AND MILD...
...BUT KRUUL IS *NOT!*
I WILL TAKE YOUR *LIGHT*-- YOUR *LIFE FORCE!*

I WILL DEVOUR YOU!
ONE OF YOU!
ALL OF YOU!
PLEASE DON'T KILL US, WE *BEG* OF YOU!
YOUR MEWLING PLEAS FALL UPON DEAF EARS.
NO MERCY!
FOR I AM KR--
OH
SPLAT

OH DEAR.
I THINK I STEPPED IN SOMETHING.
I'M NOT SURPRISED, IT'S TERRIBLE MESSY ON THIS PART OF THE *WITCHES' ROAD.*
I'VE A GOOD MIND TO WRITE A STERN LETTER TO WHOEVER IS IN CHARGE OF JANITORIAL SERVICES HERE.
DEATH AGREES WITH YOU, OLD WOMAN. I DON'T RECALL YOU BEING THIS FUNNY WHEN YOU WERE LIVING.
OH, I MADE JOKES THEN, TOO, I JUST KEPT THEM TO MYSELF MORE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARD SOME OF THE THINGS I SAID ABOUT REED RICHARDS WHEN NO ONE WAS AROUND.
HILARIOUS.
THE WITCHES' ROAD IS SO DIFFERENT THAN THE LAST TIME WE VISITED. HARDER. GRIMMER.
HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN WALKING?
YOU'VE BEEN WALKING, *I'VE* BEEN GLIDING.
AGATHA. COME ON.
HOW LONG DO YOU THINK?
TIME GETS TRICKY HERE BUT IF I HAD TO GUESS...I'D SAY SIX WEEKS. SIX OR SEVEN.
COME OUT, CREATURE!
AT LEAST IT'S QUIET.
SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.
CERTAINLY COMPARED TO EARLIER ON THE ROAD...

"...WHEN THINGS WERE MORE *EVENTFUL.*
"WHOEVER OR WHATEVER IS TRYING TO PREVENT US FROM DISCOVERING THE *CAUSE* OF WITCHCRAFT'S *SICKNESS*...
"...HAD SOME INVENTIVE METHODS TO SLOW US DOWN.

"YOU'D THINK IT WOULD GET TIRED OF TRYING.
"I'VE DEFEATED EACH THREAT SO FAR, BUT STILL...IT *COSTS* ME.
"I'M SURE THEY KNOW THIS AND THAT'S WHY THEY KEEP COMING.
"MY ONLY CONCERN IS THAT I WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO GET WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO GO..."

...I MEAN, *LOOK* AT ME.
MY LIFE SPAN IS WASTING AWAY TO NOTHING, DURING THE MAGICAL BATTLES. WHY, I'M BEGINNING TO MANIFEST VISUALLY TOO, AT TIMES. CAN YOU SEE?
I'M A *CRONE*. I LOOK ALMOST AS OLD AS YOU, AGATHA.
THANK YOU. THAT'S LOVELY.
SMILES? MY, YOU REALLY DELIGHT YOURSELF WITH YOUR OWN JOKES.
NO, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT THIS WALK--THIS LONG, *LONG* WALK.
DESPITE MY LOOMING DEMISE...
...MORE AND MORE WITH EACH DAY AND EACH STEP...
I FEEL *BETTER* ABOUT MYSELF.
BY VIRTUE OF OUR SITUATION, I HAVE TO LOOK AHEAD.
IT'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DRUM INTO YOU FOREVER...
...HOW NO ONE IS WITHOUT THEIR MISTAKES.
EXCEPT *ME.*

ALL YOU CAN DO IS LEARN FROM THEM AND NOT MAKE THE SAME ONE TWICE.
FOR INSTANCE, YOU'VE STOPPED LISTENING TO THAT ANNOYING BROTHER OF YOURS, I'M HAPPY TO LEARN.
AND YES, YOU CAN ATONE. TRY TO.
BUT YOU LOOK AHEAD.
YES, LIKE YOU SAY, ONE STEP OR ONE DAY AT A TIME.
STILL...
...AT THE RATE I'M DEPLETING MY LIFE SPAN, HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK I HAVE?
NOT A CLUE.
NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT THAT, SO IT'S BEST NOT TO DWELL ON IT.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE SUDDENLY GOING TO STOP USING YOUR POWERS.
BESIDES, IF YOU DO USE UP ALL OF YOUR LIFE...
...BEING DEAD'S NOT SO BAD.
THAT'S A MATTER OF OPINION...

...AND *NOT* ONE I SHARE.
MOTHER-- *NATALYA!*
YOU'RE HERE... FINALLY. I WAS CONCERNED THAT YOU HADN'T SHOWN YOURSELF ALL THIS TIME ON THE ROAD--I FEARED WE'D NEVER FIND YOU!
OH, IT WASN'T EASY TO COME HERE, WANDA. THE FORCE THAT ATTACKS YOU IS ALSO DOING *EVERYTHING* IT CAN TO KEEP ME AWAY WHILE YOU WALK THE ROAD.
I'LL BE GONE AGAIN IN A MOMENT, I'M SURE.
AND CALL ME MOTHER... IF YOU WANT. I LIKE HEARING YOU SAY IT.
I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU YOU'RE CLOSE--THAT YOU'RE *ALMOST* THERE--
--BUT THAT SOMETHING'S COMING FOR YOU--YOUR WORST ENEMY...YOUR WORST *FEAR.*

YES, AND HEAVEN FORBID YOU JUST COME OUT AND SAY WHAT *EXACTLY.*
YOU'RE RIGHT, AGATHA--YOU AND I HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB OF KEEPING WANDA IN A CLOUD.
YOUR FOE IS *CHAOS*, DAUGHTER.
CHAOS? WAIT, I KNOW OF A LORD CHAOS... AND AMATSU-MIKABOSHI TOO, IF THAT--
BIGGER. GREATER THAN EITHER OF THEM. LIKE ETERNITY OR NIGHTMARE, AN ENTITY OF THE SAME SIZE AND POWER--
--WHOSE VERY FIBER AND BEING IS AT THE HEART OF WITCHCRAFT, *YOURS* ESPECIALLY SO--
NO. *ALREADY.* IT'S PULLING ME *AWAY*--I TOLD YOU--I'VE NO TIME--
BE READY, DAUGHTER, YOUR *NEXT* ATTACK DRAWS NEAR.
I WILL BE, MOTHER, I SWEAR--BUT *WHAT* IS THIS THREAT I'M TO FACE?
THE THING YOU SEEM TO DWELL ON THE *MOST*, OF COURSE--THE THING YOU FEAR...
...THE ONE THING THAT, DESPITE YOUR PROTESTS, STILL HOLDS *SHAME* AND *FEAR* IN YOUR HEART--THAT YOU'VE STILL NOT *TRULY* LAID TO REST...

...YOUR OWN PAST!
WIFE!
ALLY!
FOE!
DAUGHTER!
LOVER!
SISTER!
MOTHER!

FRIEND!
MOTHER!

DAUGHTER, DON'T LISTEN TO THEM. I SWEAR I AM YOUR--
I'M NOT YOUR DAUGHTER!
I NEVER WAS.
AND I'M SORRY.
NOT NOW, WANDA, DON'T GO SOFT!
IT'S NOT THEM, WANDA, REMEMBER THAT--

--THEY'RE JUST *SHADOWS* IN A FRACTURED MIRROR!
YOU LOVED ME--
--HOW CAN YOU LEAVE MY SOUL TRAPPED IN--
YOU'RE *NOT* SIMON WILLIAMS!
YOU'RE *NOT* THE VISION!
W--
DON'T EVEN... *"BROTHER"*!

DON'T LOOK BACK--
--THE PAST IS EXACTLY WHERE IT BELONGS.
I THINK THIS--BELIEVE THIS WITH ALL MY HEART.
EVEN AS I WEAKEN-- EVEN AS I AGE--
--I LOOK AHEAD.

AND *NEVER* STOP FIGHTING.
NEVER.
IT'S HOW I IMAGINE MY MOTHER'S FINAL MOMENTS--
--FEARLESS.
AND IF THIS NOW IS MY OWN APPOINTED TIME TO *DIE*...
...THEN I FACE IT *WITHOUT* FEAR OR SHAME!

WANDA.
WANDA.
WANDA, WILL YOU *OPEN* YOUR EYES...
...AND TAKE A *LOOK* AROUND.

AND DO STOP SQUINTING-- FOR SOMEONE WHO'S SO CONCERNED ABOUT GETTING OLD, THAT'S A FINE WAY TO GET AGE LINES.
I SHOULD KNOW.
HOLD ON, WHERE DOES THIS LIGHT COME FROM THAT CLEARED THE WAY?
ARE THESE TINY CREATURES AROUND US? YES, THEY ARE--TINY GLOWING BEINGS.
I WONDER WHY THEY CHOSE TO HELP ME?
YOU CAN THANK THEM ON THE WAY BACK...IF WE MANAGE TO *MAKE* IT BACK.
BUT LOOK-- THE WITCHES' ROAD *ENDS.*
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN THE REASON FOR THE DARKNESS--AS A MEANS TO MAKE US LOSE OUR WAY WHEN WE WERE *SO CLOSE.*

YES, WANDA, *YOU DID IT*...
MOTHER! THERE YOU ARE!
...BUT AS FOR THE ROAD, IT *ISN'T* OVER...
...IT MERELY TAKES A *DIFFERENT* FORM.

GOOD. NOW I ...NK CAROL HAD ...TTER GET SOME ...ST. SHE'S HAD ... LONG DAY!
THANK YOU, DR. BLAKE. AND... THANK ... ALL.
I AM PLEASED THAT YOU HAVE RETURNED, MY WIFE. I... HOPE THAT YOU HAVE RECONCILED THOSE THINGS THAT TROUBLED YOU!
WE'LL TAL... LATER, DARLING.
I'M NOT ...XACTLY SURE, ...TLEMEN, BUT ...FF AND ...
JB
2015

7 Classic variant by **June Brigman**

Scarlet
Witch
AJA
14

I SUPPOSE IT WAS *ALWAYS* MEANT TO BE LIKE THIS...
HERE WE ARE, THE CLASSIC WITCHES' TRIO-- MAIDEN, MOTHER AND CRONE.
YES, NATALYA, AND I ASSUME *I'M* THE CRONE IN THIS TEAM.
CHARMING.
OH, AND DON'T THINK I DON'T SEE YOU *SMILING*, WANDA.
NO, AGATHA, THAT'S NOT WHAT--I--
--ALL I KNOW IS WE'RE AT THE END OF THE WITCHES' ROAD IN THE DIMENSION OF THE WITCH GODDESS... *OUR* DEITY...

...AND I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M SEEING. SUCH *SPECTACLE.*
INDEED, MY DAUGHTER, THIS IS FARTHER THAN ANYONE-- *ANY WITCH--* HAS BEEN...
...THE ABODE OF SHE WE SERVE WITH OUR ART AND HEX.
AND NOT JUST THE WITCHES OF EARTH, BUT THROUGHOUT THE *UNIVERSE.*
EVEN *I* SOMETIMES FORGET THAT MAGIC CAN EXIST ON *ANY* PLANET WHERE THERE'S LIFE.
MOTHER, WE HAVEN'T REALLY *SPOKEN*--ABOUT YOU AND I AND THE PAST.
YES, BUT FOR THAT WE'LL NEED TIME AND CALM. HERE, NOW, THERE'S THE TASK AT HAND: TO CURE THE "SICKNESS" THAT'S BEFALLEN WITCHCRAFT, OUR CRAFT.
THERE'S TOO MUCH *PERIL* TO STAY ALERT FOR.
BUT WE COULD TALK NOW, WHILE WE TRAVEL...
WHAT HAPPENED WHEN PIETRO AND I WERE BORN?
HUSH. KEEP MOVING. KEEP LOOKING.
...I DON'T SEE ANY--
LOOK AGAIN! NOT WITH YOUR EYES, USE YOUR *WITCHES' SIGHT!*

"AIMLESS ONES!"
AIMLESS? I KNOW OF THE *MINDLESS* ONES--THESE AREN'T--
CLOSE ENOUGH, AGATHA.
MORE MINDFUL THESE ARE, BUT NO MORE REASONING...
...*WHAT* THEY DO, *HOW* THEY'LL ATTACK--YOU CAN NEVER KNOW FOR SURE.
THEY'RE INSTRUMENTS OF *CHAOS*, OUR ULTIMATE FOE IN ALL OF THIS!
THEY SEEM EASY TO DEFEAT, AT LEAST.

EXCEPT THE PROMISE OF DEFEAT DOESN'T SEEM TO *DETER* THEM.
THEY KEEP *COMING.*
AGATHA'S RIGHT, I DON'T THINK THEY'RE HERE TO BEAT US, JUST WEAR US DOWN--
--ESPECIALLY *YOU,* WANDA.
WANDA, YOUR LIFE IS *SHORTENING* WITH EACH SPELL YOU CAST--DON'T WASTE THEM ON THIS PANTOMIME.
SHE'S *RIGHT,* "MAIDEN"...
...THE MOTHER AND THE CRONE HAVE GOT THIS.
BUT MOTHER...I... I *DON'T* WANT TO LEAVE YOU.
NO TIME FOR SENTIMENT! IF YOU'RE MY *DAUGHTER,* THEN BE A *WITCH!*
GO!
I OBEY HER...
...I GO.
IT'S NOT MUCH FURTHER UNTIL I SEE SHE'S RIGHT...

...THAT THE *GREATER* BATTLE LIES AHEAD.
THE GODDESS OF ALL WITCHES.
BOUND BY *CHAOS.*
SICKENED-- *DYING--*
THE *ANSWER* TO WHAT I'VE BEEN SENSING AND FEELING SINCE THIS ALL BEGAN.
THIS MAKES NO SENSE.
CHAOS AND MAGIC HAVE *ALWAYS* BEEN LINKED--
--ABETTING THE UNDOING OF PHYSICAL ABSOLUTES.
BUT THIS NOW--
--INSANITY-- TRULY--

GHAA
MORE CHAOS ENERGY...
NO.
I *WON'T* BE BOUND, THANK YOU.
NOW.
YOU.
SHOW YOURSELF!

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AND SO HE DOES--HE--*IT.*
AND A *GRAND* ENTRANCE, TOO.
CHAOS.
IT SPEAKS IN A TONGUE OF SOME KIND--
--BEYOND THE POWER OF ANY SPELLS OF TRANSLATION I KNOW.
GUTTURAL, DISCORDANT.
AND YET, LIKE EVERYTHING HERE NOW...
...I *UNDERSTAND.*
CHAOS IS TIRED OF ITS ROLE AS "WITCHCRAFT'S CONSORT."
IT WANTS TO *RULE.*

OH *NO,* MY FINE FELLOW...
...WE *CAN'T* HAVE THAT.
CHAOS IS-- *STRONGER*-- WILDER.
CAN'T--
MY HEXES--
SPELLS OF ORDER.
POLYTHEISTIC MAGICK.
NO.
NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND--
I'M AGING--
--LIKE MY GODDESS BEFORE ME...
...DYING.

HOLD ON, WANDA!
WE'RE HERE, DAUGHTER!
ONE WITCH AGAINST AN ENTITY OF THAT SIZE AND POWER HAS NO HOPE.
BUT WITH THE THREE OF US...
...THERE'S A CHANCE!
SO... WHO'S THE CRONE NOW?
OH, AGATHA, STOP IT.

IT CROSSES MY MIND--
MY MOTHER-- THAT I'M HEXING ALONGSIDE HER.
BUT EVEN AS THE IDEA TAKES SHAPE--
IT'S **NOT** ENOUGH--
--THE THREE OF US TOGETHER. ***WE'RE*** NOT ENOUGH!
CHAOS IS ***WINNING!***
WANDA, WE'RE ***ALREADY*** DEAD--
--GO NOW, WHILE YOU CAN, AND--
I'M ***NOT*** LEAVING, MOTHER.
NOT ***YOU...***
...AND ***NOT*** MY GODDESS!
WAIT!
TOGETHER!
THAT'S ***IT!***

TOGETHER... BUT NOT AS THREE WITCHES--
BUT AS ONE! A MELDING OF US. YES, OF COURSE, DAUGHTER!
AND BETTER YET, WITH YOU LIVING AND US DEAD, YOU'LL BE THE FULCRUM.
YES, GREAT THINKING, WANDA.
GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE NOT GOING SENILE IN YOUR OLD AGE.
NOW, LET'S SEE HOW WE FARE, NOT AS THREE WITCHES...
...BUT AS WITCHES THREE!
DOUBLE, DOUBLE TOIL AND TROUBLE; FIRE BURN, AND CAULDRON BUBBLE.
AGATHA!
SORRY, COULDN'T HELP MYSELF.

ORDER OVER CHAOS--I THINK IT'S WORKING--
YES!
LOOK, HIS HOLD'S EBBING, CAN YOU SEE?
NO, OUR SPELL *WON'T* HOLD--NOT LONG ENOUGH--CAN'T YOU FEEL IT?
WE NEED TO CONTAIN OUR POWER--
--CHAOS' POWER IS RESURGING, DISSIPATING OUR HEX--
KINETIC ENERGY--CONTROLLED, NOT WAYWARD--THAT'S WHAT WE NEED!
TO ACT AS A *BARRIER*--AS YOU SAY, WANDA--TO "CONTAIN" OUR HEX.
LINKED, TOO--LINKED TO *US*--TO *YOU.*
AND I KNOW JUST *WHO* TO CALL!

I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, HOW I CAN USUALLY SENSE WHEN HE'S ON HIS WAY.
BUT NOT TODAY.
TODAY, MY *BROTHER* SURPRISES ME.
PIETRO!
QUITE A *PREDICAMENT* YOU'RE IN, SISTER.
HA!
I'D SAY YOU NEED YOUR BIG BROTHER.
A GIFT, DAUGHTER.
FOR THERE SHOULD ALWAYS BE LOVE BETWEEN YOU.
PIETRO! I'M *SORRY* FOR THE WORDS I SAID.
ME, TOO.
BUT THE PAST IS *BEHIND* US-- FOR ME CONSTANTLY--
--AND SO *NO MATTER!*
BROTHER, THE WOMAN HERE WITH ME-- DO YOU KNOW--
NO, WANDA, THAT'S TOO MUCH RIGHT NOW.
THE REST CAN WAIT...
MY SUMMONING HEX WAS SUCH THAT HE INSTINCTIVELY KNEW WHAT'S NEEDED OF HIM.
"...JUST LET HIM *RUN!*"
ᚠᚺᚨᛃᛉᚷᛚᚱ!

IT'S **DONE.**
CHAOS IS GONE, CAN YOU FEEL IT?
GONE FROM HERE, GONE FOR NOW--BUT IT'S AS MUCH AN ETERNAL ENTITY AS OUR OWN QUEEN, WITCHCRAFT OR NIGHTMARE OR DEATH HERSELF.
SO WHAT'S **NEXT** FOR ME?
FOR YOU?
TIME YOU WENT **BACK.** GO, MY YOUNG RUNNER.
BUT BROTHER, I'VE MUCH TO TELL YOU. COME SEE ME SOON.
AND I'VE MUCH TO **ASK.**
OH, AND I MAY BE SLOW SOMETIMES--IN MY HEAD, ANYWAY...
...BUT THE LOVELY LADY OVER HERE IS OUR MOTHER, YES?
WHAT GAVE ME AWAY?
ARE YOU **REALLY** ASKING ME THAT, **DRESSED** AS YOU ARE--YOU, WITH A **FACE** SO MUCH LIKE WANDA'S?
OH, AND YOU WHISPER ABOUT AS SUBTLY AS A SHAKESPEARIAN HAM ACTOR GIVING ASIDES TO THE AUDIENCE.
WE'LL MEET PROPERLY SOON, I TRUST.
YES, SON. **SOON.** I SWEAR. **NOW,** GO.

WE *STILL* HAVE THE PROBLEM OF OUR GODDESS, LOOK--
--SHE REMAINS SO SICK.
SICK? I'D SAY DEAD, AS NEAR AS. WHY, HER VERY SOUL IS EBBING AWAY, CAN'T YOU FEEL IT...
...AND IF OUR GODDESS DIES, SO DOES WITCHCRAFT, OUR ART.
GONE *FOREVER.*
IF SHE NEEDS A SOUL...
...LET HER HAVE *MINE.*
OH, MOTHER!
NATALYA, NO, YOU KNOW THE PRICE, YOU MUST DO.
IT WILL COST YOU *EVERYTHING*--YOUR MEMORIES AND PERSONALITY, ALL ASPECTS OF WHO YOU ARE.
WHO *ELSE?* WANDA HAS A LIFE TO LEAD.
ME. I COULD.
AND I'M ALIVE, SURE, BUT NOT FOR LONG. LOOK AT ME.
HUSH, CHILD. YOU HAVE TO LIVE--*FOR ME.*
AGATHA, TOO.
A CHANCE WOULD BE A FINE THING.
OLD WOMAN, YOU WERE *NEVER* AS GOOD A SEER AS ME.
THERE'S A FEW TASKS AHEAD FOR YOU, TOO...AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW.

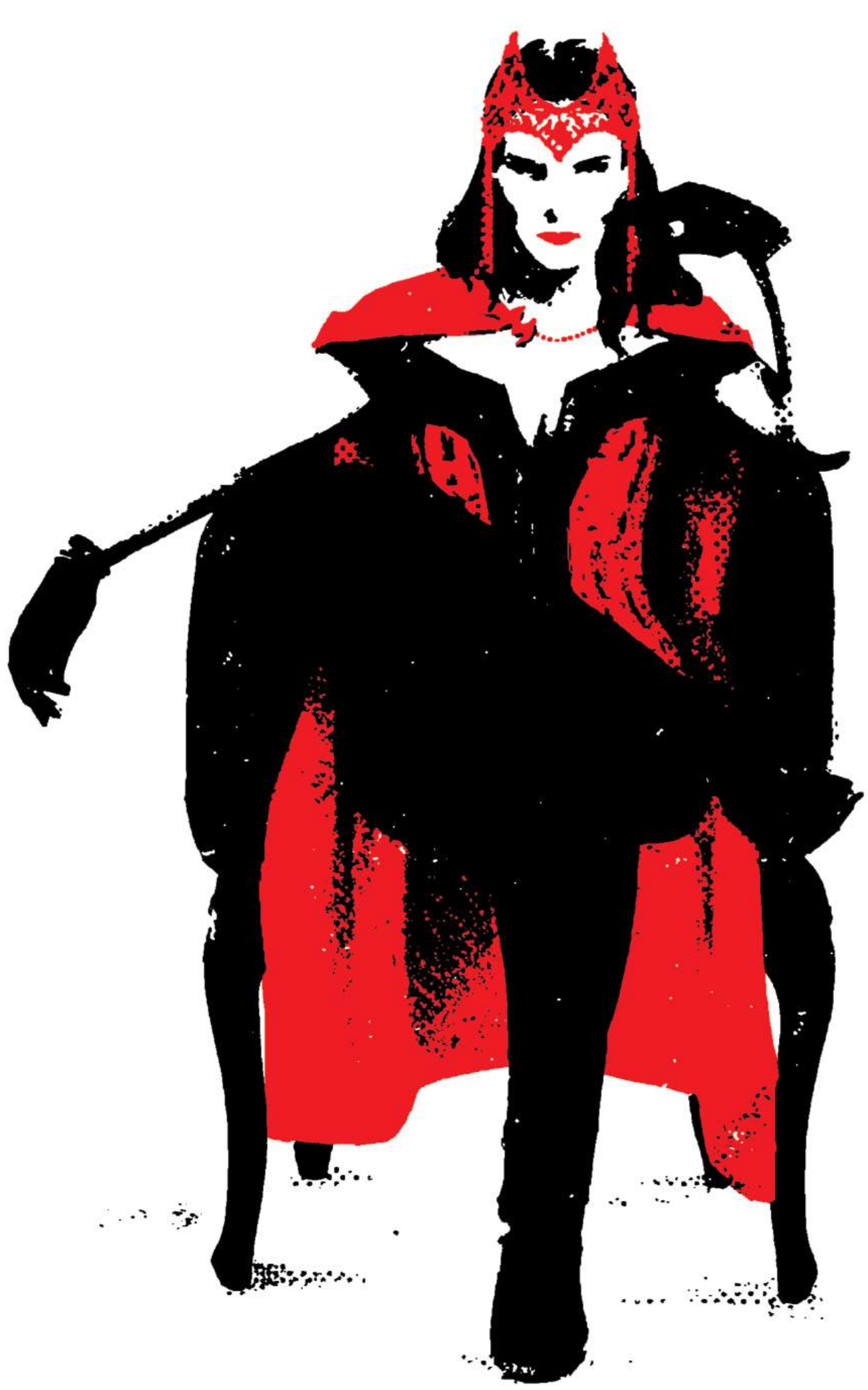
SO LET IT *BEGIN*...
...BEFORE I *CHANGE* MY MIND.
MOTHER, WE NEVER HAD THAT TALK--THERE'S STILL SO *MUCH* I *DON'T* KNOW.
YES, I'M SORRY TO LEAVE YOU--YOU AND PIETRO--WITH SO MUCH UNSAID, BUT WE'VE NO TIME.
WITHOUT ME, OUR GODDESS WILL BE DEAD IN MOMENTS.
I'LL MAKE YOU THIS *PROMISE*, AT LEAST...
...I'LL MAKE THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY *PAY* FOR KILLING YOU.
IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?
NO, WANDA, IT *WASN'T* THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY...
...IT WAS YOUR OWN *FATHER!*
WHAT?

...MOTHER?!!
WANDA, LOOK...
...YOU'RE *YOUNG* AGAIN.
YES, AND MORE THAN THAT, I CAN FEEL THAT THE COUNTER'S BEEN RESET ON MY LIFESPAN. I CAN START FRESH.
AND I'M ALIVE!
SHE DID IT--NATALYA--USING THE POWER OF OUR GODDESS!
MOTHER.

JUST SO IT'S CLEAR IN MY MIND...
...ALL THIS TIME, YOU'VE KNOWN MY REAL MOTHER'S IDENTITY AND NEVER TOLD ME.
AS SHE INSTRUCTED ME TO.
IT STRIKES ME THAT WHENEVER YOU LEARN ANYTHING ABOUT ANYTHING--THINGS CAN TAKE AN EXTREME TURN.
YOUR MOTHER WAS AWARE OF THAT POSSIBILITY, SO SHE THOUGHT IT BEST YOU LEARN ABOUT HER WHEN FATE DEEMED IT SO.
FATE?
WHAT ABOUT *FACTS?*
SOMETIMES I DESPAIR OF WITCHES' WAYS.
ANYWAY, WHERE WAS I GOING WITH THIS--YOU KNEW MY MOTHER AND DIDN'T TELL ME, SO--
--WHO WAS MY FATHER? TELL ME THAT.
NO IDEA.
AGATHA!
HONESTLY, I HAVEN'T A CLUE.
WOULD I LIE TO YOU?
THAT'S A RHETORICAL QUESTION, RIGHT?
WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
ABOUT?
NOTHING. THINKING.
THE FUTURE.

7 Story Thus Far variant by **Nimit Malavia**

Scarlet Witch



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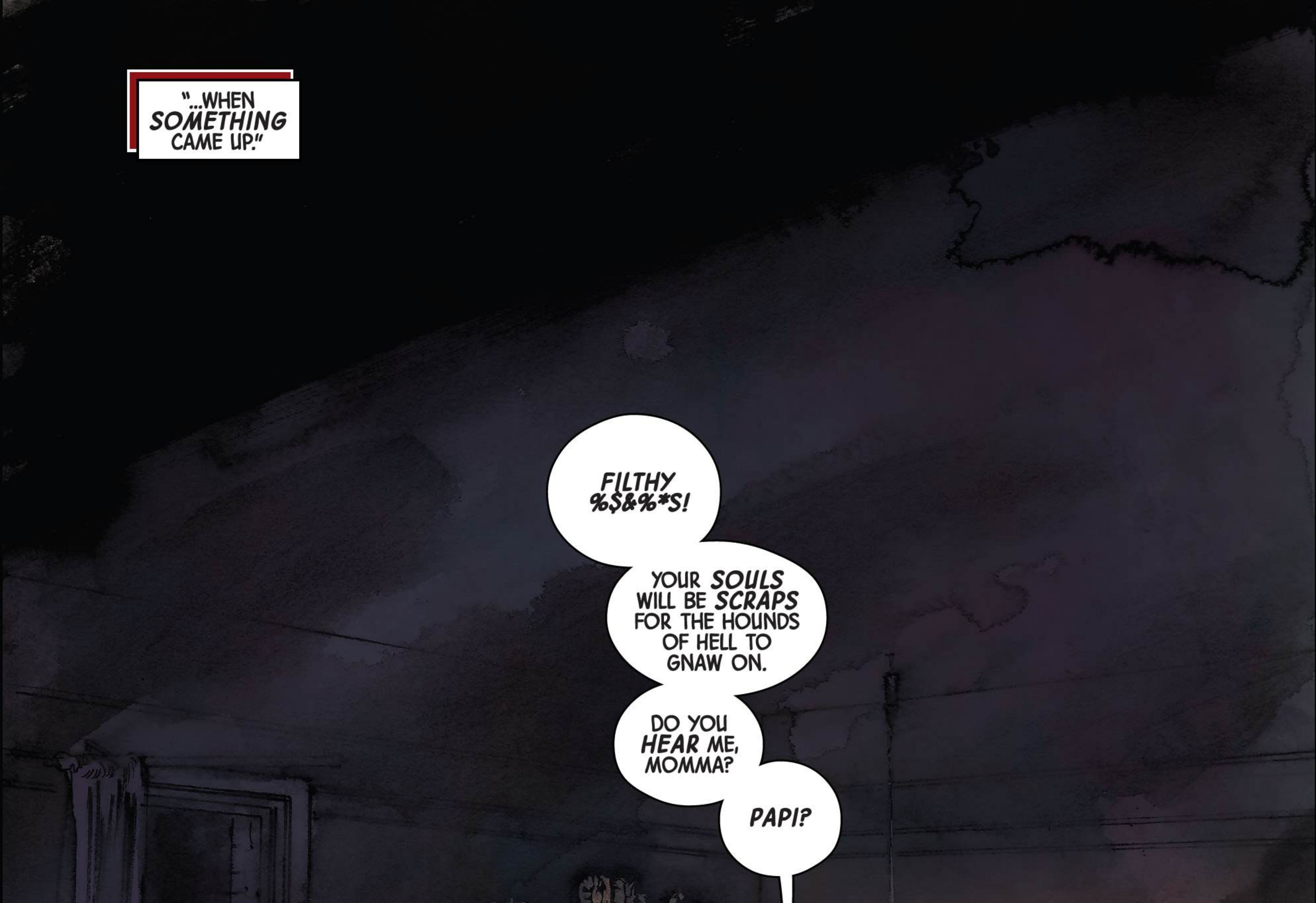
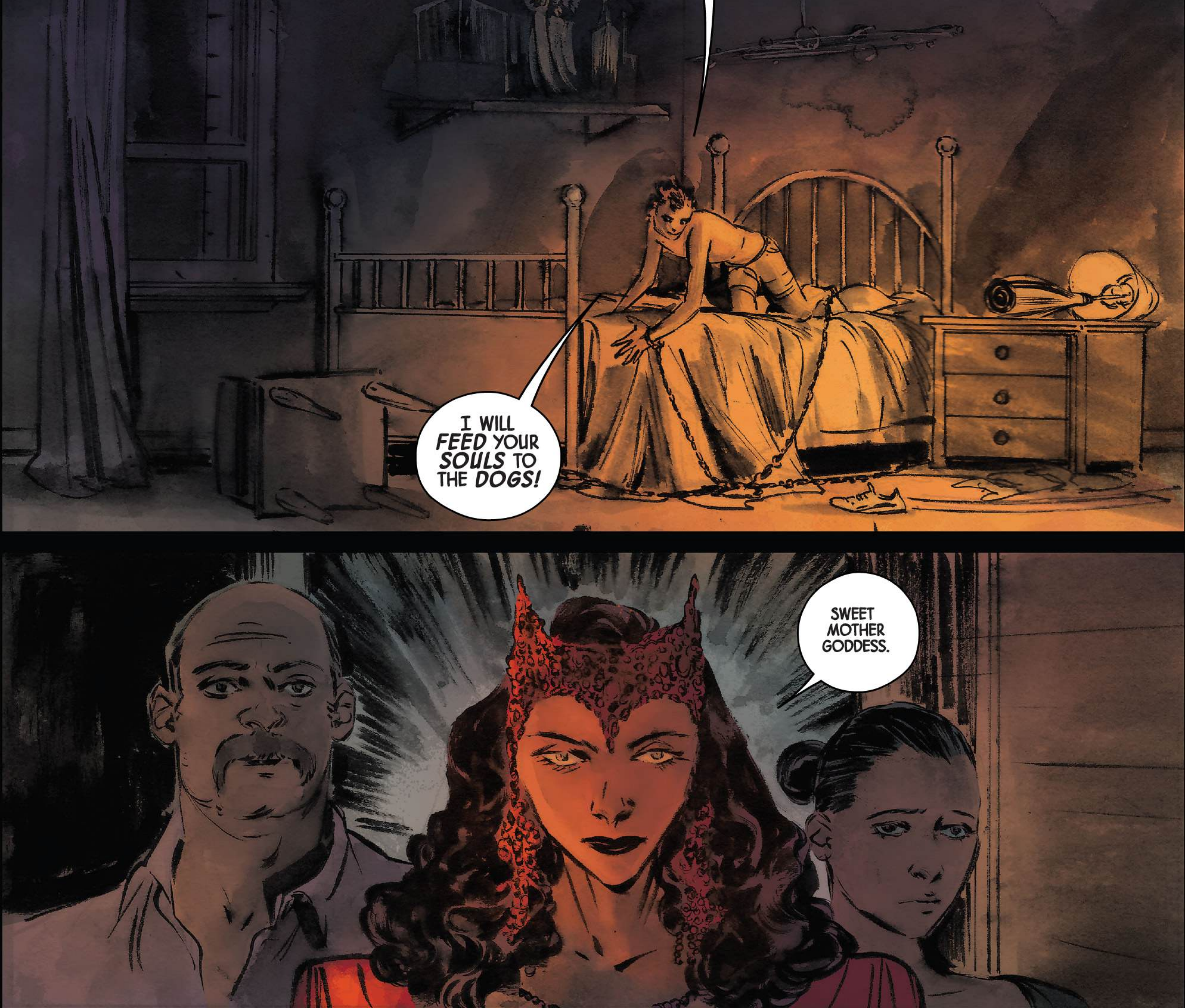
"I'M SORRY I'M LATE...
Are you ready?
"...IT *COULDN'T* BE HELPED.
"I WAS ON MY WAY HERE...


"...WHEN *SOMETHING* CAME UP."
*FILTHY %$&%*S!*
YOUR *SOULS* WILL BE *SCRAPS* FOR THE HOUNDS OF HELL TO GNAW ON.
DO YOU *HEAR* ME, MOMMA?
PAPI?
I WILL *FEED* YOUR *SOULS* TO THE *DOGS!*


SWEET MOTHER GODDESS.

THANK YOU FOR COMING, MS. MAXIMOFF.
NO NEED FOR THANKS, MISTER AND MISSUS SOLEDAD, STEPPING IN, HELPING WHEN WITCHCRAFT AND EVIL HAVE SOMEHOW COME TOGETHER...
...IT'S WHAT I DO.
I WILL DRAG YOU ***HELL-BOUND*** WITH ME, PAPI!
YOU'LL ALL DIE!
HOW LONG HAS YOUR SON BEEN LIKE THIS?
GUSTAVO BECAME ***THIS*** TWO WEEKS AGO.
WE CALLED A PRIEST FIRST... WHO REFERRED US TO ANOTHER PRIEST, ONE WHO SPECIALIZED IN ***EXORCISMS.***
HE CAME, PERFORMED SEVERAL RITES.
BUT NOTHING WORKED.
ADMITTING FAILURE, THE PRIEST SPOKE TO A FRIEND OF HIS--A NUN IN ***SPAIN***--
--SHE TOLD HIM HOW YOU SUCCESSFULLY DEALT WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS OVER THERE, RECENTLY--
SO YOU WENT FROM THE ***GODLY*** TO THE ***UNGODLY*** AND CONTACTED ME.

I WAS JOKING BUT-- I KNOW IT'S NOT FUNNY.
I'M *SORRY*, IT'S JUST SOMETIMES THE HORROR OF THINGS--
I UNDERSTAND. BELIEVE ME, I DO. I'M AN UNDERTAKER.
WHEN A BODY'S GASES CAUSE IT TO EXPLODE IN YOUR FACE, YOU EITHER LAUGH OR VOMIT. USUALLY BOTH--HOPEFULLY NOT AT THE EXACT SAME MOMENT.
GALLOWS HUMOR.
WELL, I'M *SERIOUS*-- DEADLY SERIOUS-- ABOUT *HELPING* YOU.
I'LL FREE YOUR LITTLE BOY, I *PROMISE*.

WE ARE *CATHOLIC.*
YES, YOU FIRST SUMMONING A PRIEST-- I ASSUMED AS MUCH.
MY PARENTS WERE FROM CUBA, MY WIFE'S FROM COSTA RICA.
BRINGING A WITCH INTO OUR HOME...IT'S SOMETHING WE WOULD *NEVER* ENTERTAIN, UNTIL *THIS* WITH GUSTAVO.
NOW ALL I FEEL IS GRATITUDE.
THANK ME *AFTER*--WHEN GUSTAVO'S HAPPILY IN YOUR ARMS.
NOW...
...EXORCISMS CAN BE MANY THINGS, BUT *RARELY* ARE THEY HARMONIOUS OR PLEASANT TO BEHOLD.
I'D WAIT HERE IF I WERE YOU. WHAT'S SEEN CANNOT BE UNSEEN.
NOW, "GUSTAVO"-- DEMON...
...*WHAT'S* ALL THIS *ABOUT?*
SILLY QUESTION...

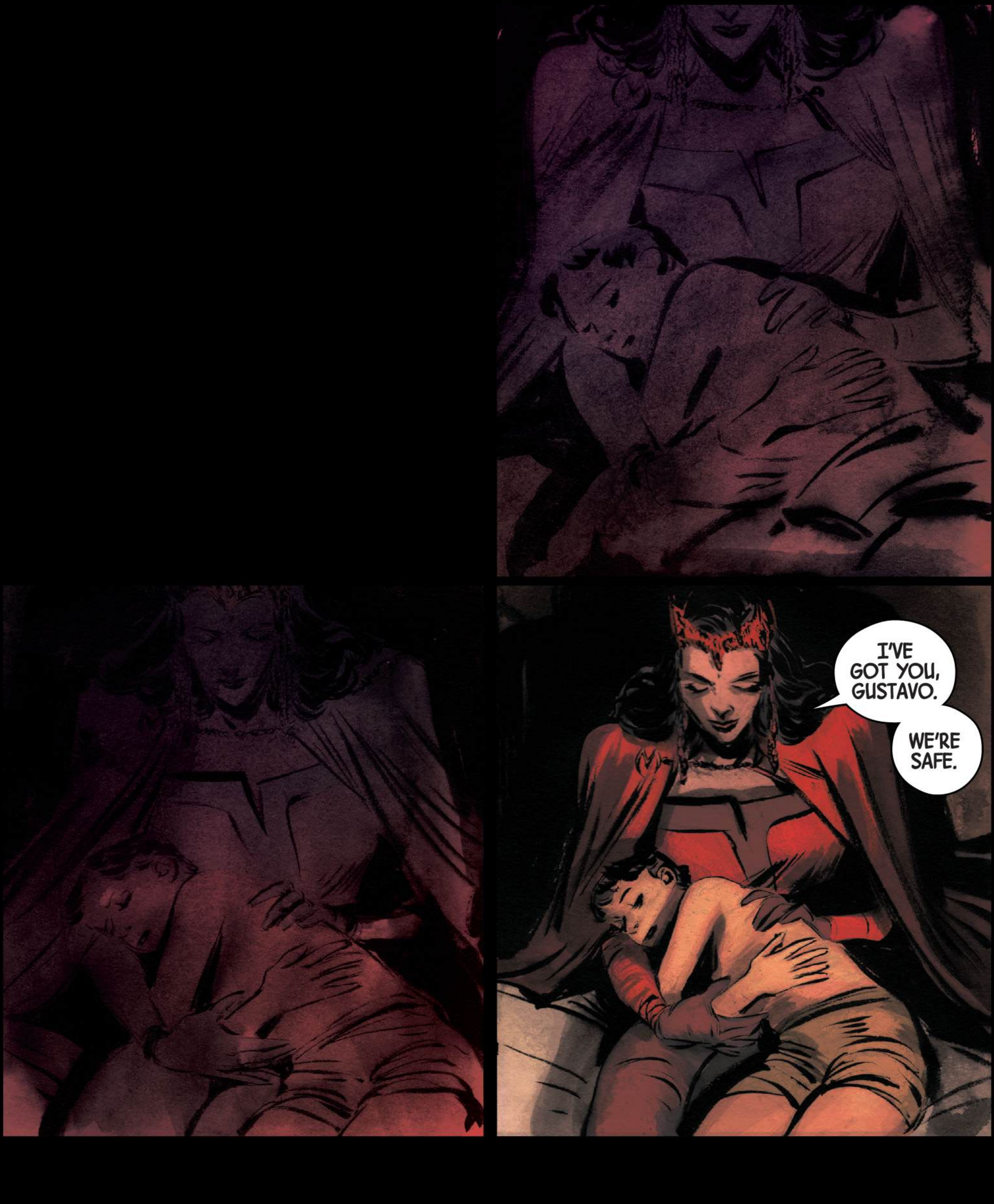
...WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?
MOMMA.
I WANT MY MOMMA.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE HAD TO FREE A POSSESSED INNOCENT--
--THERE WAS SPAIN AND JAPAN, TOO.
HELP ME, RED LADY!
I'M HERE, GUSTAVO--FOR YOU--
NO HELP FROM HER!
DEATH TO HER!
NOOOO!
DON'T WORRY, GUSTAVO, I WON'T LET HIM HARM YOU ANY MORE.
THIS BOY'S SOUL IS EVEN MORE ENRAPTURED, THOUGH--EVEN MORE THAN THOSE I FREED IN KYOTO.
--HEX WITH CARE--
NO!
H...HOLD ON.
THERE'S SOMETHING MORE TO THIS.
AH, NOW I SEE--
IT'S NOT THE BOY YOU WANT--
IT'S HIS BLOODLINE-- A LINK TO THE PAST--
COME, DEMON, DON'T BE SHY...SHOW ME EVERYTHING!

I SENSED AS MUCH.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT GUSTAVO'S YOUNG LIFE-- IT'S HIS FATHER--
ELCOM
SEGUROS-E
OBJETOS RELIG
JOYER
NO.
FURTHER BACK STILL.
I'M IN NEW YORK-- STILL--PART OF ME--
BUT AT THE SAME TIME...
...THIS IS HAVANA, CUBA.
DECADES AGO.
A DIFFERENT PLACE THEN... A DIFFERENT WORLD.
CLEVER.
CLEVER LITTLE WITCH.
YOU FOUND THE LINK.
YES, GUSTAVO ISN'T YOUR END-GOAL, IS HE, CREATURE--HE'S JUST A CONDUIT TO A TIME GONE BY--
--AND TO A GREAT WITCH WHO EXISTED THEN!

MISTER SOLEDAD!
YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER--YOU SAID THEY WERE FROM CUBA?
THEIR NAMES! QUICKLY!
JAIME AND ESPERANZA, BUT--THEY--*ADOPTED* ME.
IF YOU WANT THE NAMES OF MY *REAL* PARENTS, I HAVE *NO* IDEA.
WHY? DO *YOU* KNOW?
NOT YOUR PARENTS, NO, BUT YOUR *GRANDFATHER* AT LEAST.
I DOUBT YOU'LL APPROVE, NOT AFTER WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT WITCHES, BUT...
...HAVE YOU HEARD OF *SEÑOR VIOLETTA?*
YES... STORIES--*FABLES.* I DIDN'T BELIEVE--
BELIEVE NOW...

...BECAUSE IT'S *HIS* BLOOD THAT FLOWS THROUGH YOUR VEINS.
LEODANIS SALAZAR.
SEÑOR VIOLETTA.
WITCH, WARLOCK, OR *WHATEVER* HE CALLED HIMSELF THEN.
A COMPLEX MAN, FROM WHAT LITTLE I KNOW.
HE PROTECTED THE PEOPLE OF CUBA, USED HEX AND SPELL...
...BUT HE WASN'T ABOVE TAKING THE ODD *BRIBE* OR TWO FROM A MOBSTER OR GENERAL IF THE EVIL WASN'T TOO GREAT...

SALAZAR MADE HIS OWN RULES.
CUBA BACK THEN WAS AFFLUENCE, GLAMOUR, MUSIC, AND FUN.
IT WAS ALSO A PLACE OF GREED, FEAR, TYRANNY.
PERHAPS THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY FOR A MAN LIKE SALAZAR, A WITCH.
LIVE BY YOUR OWN RULES AND MORALITY.
WUMMMM
I'M NOT HERE TO JUDGE...
...JUST TO FREE HIS GREAT-GRANDSON.
BLAST
YOU CAN'T STOP ME--OR ALL I'VE DONE!
THAT STUPID PRIEST TRIED N'COULDN'T--
TAKES A WITCH TO BEAT A WITCH...
...OR A DEMON, LIKE YOU, USING WITCHCRAFT.
ALTHOUGH OUR PROXIMITY... MEANS--I CAN SENSE...
...YOU'RE NOT WHAT YOU APPEAR TO BE.
SHOW ME WHO YOU ARE!
TACHIBEN!
YOU'RE NOT A DETLENE...
...FIGHT ME WITH YOUR TRUE FACE...
...OR RUN LIKE A COWARD.


I'VE GOT YOU, GUSTAVO.
WE'RE SAFE.

WANDA, YOU SAVED OUR BOY.
THE "DEMON" *WASN'T* WHAT HE APPEARED TO BE.
ONCE I SAW THROUGH THAT, HOWEVER, HE CHOSE TO FLEE INSTEAD OF FACING ME BEFORE HE WAS READY.
READY, HOW?
THE PERSON BEHIND THIS IS TRYING TO REGAIN HIS POWER, THAT'S THE *REAL* REASON HE POSSESSED GUSTAVO.
HE DIDN'T WANT YOUR SON'S SOUL, HE WANTED THE LATENT WITCHES' ENERGY FROM YOUR ANCESTOR, SALAZAR.
I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THIS LATELY WITH MY OWN MOTHER AND ME.
THE PASSING OF THE COLOR, TOO--VIOLET IN YOUR CASE.
BUT I DON'T HAVE POWERS LIKE YOU.
NO, BUT THAT DOESN'T SPEAK FOR GUSTAVO.
I SIMPLY CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I'M THE *GRANDSON* OF SEÑOR VIOLETTA.

AND *WHO* EXACTLY WAS THIS MONSTER THAT POSSESSED OUR SON--WHAT WAS HIS TRUE NAME?
YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW. THE HEX I'VE "BLESSED" GUSTAVO WITH WILL PREVENT HIS ATTACKER FROM EVER TRYING TO HURT HIM AGAIN.
MS. MAXIMOFF, H-HOW CAN WE EVER THANK YOU?
HOW?
SIMPLE.
DON'T BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE WITCHES.
"SO *WHO* WAS IT? YOUR FOE?
"OR ARE YOU PLANNING TO KEEP US ALL IN SUSPENSE?"
"AFTER I TOOK AWAY HIS MAGICAL POWERS ON THE WITCHES' ROAD, I THOUGHT HE'D KEEP TO THE SHADOWS... FOR A WHILE ANYWAY...
"I SEE NOW--WITH AN IMMORTAL, *PSYCHOTIC* VILLAIN--I WAS NAIVELY OPTIMISTIC."

"...DECLAN DANE, THE EMERALD WARLOCK.
"HE'S OUT THERE, REACQUIRING HIS POWER...
"...USING MAGIC AND TRICKERY, AND BLOODLINES."
AH, WANDA...
...I SHOULDN'T ENJOY FIGHTIN' YOU AS MUCH AS I DO.
"I KNOW I'LL FACE HIM SOONER OR LATER.
"BUT WHEN I DO...
"...I'LL BE READY."

YOU'VE CHANGED, WANDA.
FOR THE BETTER, I HOPE.
YOU'RE MORE ASSURED FOR ONE THING...
"...AND HAPPIER."
SO, I'M RID OF YOU, FINALLY?
YES, BUT NOT FOREVER. AS ENTWINED AS OUR FATES WERE YESTERDAY, SO TOO THEY'LL BE TOMORROW.
I JUST NEED SOME TIME TO MYSELF.
YOU DESERVE IT, AGATHA. YOU'RE *ALIVE...AGAIN.* ENJOY IT.
THERE'S A PRIVATE NUDE BEACH IN THE HAMPTONS I'LL DEFINITELY BE VISITING.
I DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW THAT.
I LOVE YOU, WANDA.
AND I YOU, AGATHA.
NOW, HOP ON YOUR BROOMSTICK.
AND LIVE.

AND THAT'S WHY I'M BACK HERE AT AVENGERS HQ.
IT'S NOT LIKE OTHER TIMES--WHERE I WAS AN AVENGER BECAUSE I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING BETTER TO DO.
I NEEDED TIME AWAY--TO FIX WITCHCRAFT ABSOLUTELY.
BUT AS MUCH, I NEEDED TO FIX MYSELF.
NOT SURE HOW SUCCESSFUL I'VE BEEN...
I LEARNED ABOUT MY TRUE MOTHER.
FOUND HER *AND* LOST HER. BUT NOT IN A WAY THAT BREAKS MY HEART.
I LEARNED ABOUT OTHER THINGS, TOO.
ABOUT LINEAGE.
ABOUT *ME.*
WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT AFTER *EVERYTHING* I'VE BEEN THOUGH...
...I'M *READY* TO COME *BACK.*

I WANT TO BE AN AVENGER.
THE END.

BONUS: The first appearance of the Wu, from DOCTOR STRANGE: LAST DAYS OF MAGIC

Mike Perkins
artist

Andy Troy
color artist

VC's Cory Petit
letterer

Mike Perkins & **Andy Troy**
cover artists

THEN.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, ZELMA?...
...YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE A HEADACHE.
MY HEAD'S A WHIRL, WONG, BUT I'M OKAY, NO NEED FOR ASPIRIN...YET.
I'M JUST BLOWN AWAY BY EVERYTHING I'M READING HERE.
AH, THE *MEDICO MISTICO.*
THIS "CATALOGUE" OF MAGES AND WIZARDS GOES ON AND ON.
WITCHES, TOO--
--ONE WITCH WHO I'M READING ABOUT NOW IS RELATIVELY NEW TO THE GAME OF MAGIC.
HER NAME IS *ALICE GULLIVER.*
AND, INTERESTINGLY, HER ORIGIN IS LINKED TO STEPHEN...TO SOME DEGREE, ANYWAY.
BACK WHEN SHE WAS YOUNGER, OF COURSE...
...AND HER HAIR WAS STILL THE COLOR OF *NIGHT.*
NOW.

THE PAST.
DARK, LIKE THAT NIGHT IN THE STREETS OF HONG KONG, I IMAGINE...
BACK WHEN STEPHEN WAS HUNTING FOR A WAY TO REACH DORMAMMU...
ALL THE WHILE, HIMSELF HUNTED BY DORMAMMU'S ACOLYTES.
STRANGE IS HERE! WE HAVE HIM!
KILL HIM! HIS DEATH WILL HONOR OUR LORD!
I GUESS STEPHEN'S TALENTS BACK THEN WEREN'T WHAT THEY ARE NOW.
FEWER SPELLS AND LESS SKILL CASTING THEM.
FIGHTING SO MANY, WINNING WAS NOT A SURE THING.
UNTIL MAGICAL BOLTS OF PINK AND ORANGE TURNED THE TIDE.

MY "WAND"--THE STAFF OF WAN-TAI--INFORMS ME THAT YOU ARE *STEPHEN STRANGE*.
ERR...YES, YES I AM.
BUT YOU HAVE ME AT A DISADVANTAGE, MADAM. WHO MIGHT YOU BE?
I AM THE *AUGUST WU OF THE CORAL SHORE*. HONG KONG'S MAGICAL GUARDIAN.
OH, HEAVENS. OF COURSE I'VE HEARD OF YOU. THE *ANCIENT ONE* SPOKE OF YOU OFTEN.
I'M FLATTERED. I HOPE. WHAT DID HE SAY?
GLOWING TERMS, I ASSURE YOU. MOST COMPLIMENTARY.
I'D BEEN SENSING YOU HERE IN THE CITY...
...EVEN IF YOUR GOALS AND INTENTIONS AREN'T AS CLEAR.
WHY, I'LL HAPPILY EXPLAIN EVERYTHING--AS MUCH AS I KNOW MYSELF, ANYWAY...
...I SEEK A GREAT EVIL, ONE THAT IS SO VEILED IN MYSTERY, THE WORLD ISN'T AWARE OF ITS EXISTENCE... APART FROM ITS ACOLYTES, LIKE THE ONES YOU JUST DEFEATED.
YES, AND WE COULD ENCOUNTER MORE OF THEM AT ANY MOMENT. THESE STREETS AREN'T SAFE, COME ON.
WHERE WOULD YOU TAKE ME?

"WHY, MY *HOME*, OF COURSE."
YOU ARE SURPRISED THAT I HAVE NO UNCANNY TRAPPINGS, NO ARCANE AURA...
...I USED TO HAVE THE KIND OF SANCTUARY YOU PROBABLY HOPED TO SEE.
INCREDIBLE! HOW DID YOU KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING? YOU CAN READ MINDS?
NO, I READ YOUR FACE. NO POWER, JUST A LIFE LIVED.
MY ABODE WAS ONCE FILLED WITH MAGICAL TALISMANS AND ANCIENT TOTEMS.
WELL, YES, I--MY OLD LAIR HAD TOTEMS AND MOOD BUT WHAT IT LACKED... WAS LIFE.
A GOOD FEW HANGING PAPER LANTERNS, TOO, WHICH AS I RECALL MADE THE DIM LIGHTING QUITE PRETTY.
BUT YOU CHANGED FROM THAT?

I MET ADDY-- ON A CASE, OF COURSE. IT BROUGHT ME INTO CONTACT WITH THIS THOROUGHLY TRADITIONAL MAN.
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A COMPLIMENT, LUV.
MY HUSBAND IS A POLICEMAN, YOU SEE. ONE OF THE *BEST.*
EVEN IF SHE DOES SAY SO HERSELF.
DETECTIVE SERGEANT ADAM GULLIVER. NICE TO MEET YOU, MR. STRANGE.
THAT'S MY COOKING YOU SMELL--THE MISSUS IS TERRIBLE IN THE KITCHEN-- YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY FOR DINNER, IF YOU'VE TIME.
THANK YOU, BUT NO. I JUST NEEDED A MOMENT TO COLLECT MYSELF, BUT NOW THAT I'M RESTED, I SHOULD KEEP GOING.
WELL, YOU'VE MET MY HUSBAND. YOU SHOULD MEET OUR DAUGHTER, TOO.
ALICE, SAY HELLO TO MR. STRANGE.
HI.
YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT. COME ON, WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS?
HELLO, MR. STRANGE. NICE TO MEET YOU.
NOW CAN I GO BACK TO MY MAGAZINE?

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE MY DAUGHTER. SHE'S AT THAT AGE.
I RECALL BEING THE SAME WAY MYSELF. UNFORTUNATELY, IN MY CASE, I'VE ONLY JUST GROWN OUT OF IT.
I WANT HER TO WORK WITH MY MOTHER...BECOME A BUSINESSWOMAN. SHE WANTS TO BE A POLICEMAN LIKE HER FATHER. WE HAD A DISCUSSION ABOUT IT YESTERDAY, IN FACT... WHICH BECAME RATHER HEATED.
I CAN *HEAR* YOU, YOU KNOW? I'M RIGHT HERE.
IT WAS A POINTLESS ARGUMENT ANYWAY...FATE WILL DECREE AS IT CHOOSES.
SHE KNOWS I LOVE HER, WHICH IS REALLY ALL THAT MATTERS, AFTER ALL.
I LOVE YOU, TOO, MUM.

SO YOU'RE GOING OFF IN SEARCH OF THIS "SECRET EVIL."
I MUST. YES.
I WOULD ACCOMPANY YOU--HELP YOU--BUT I'M AWARE OF A DEMONIC ENTITY THAT HAS RECENTLY ARRIVED ON THESE SHORES. AS YOU HUNT YOUR PREY, SO I MUST HUNT MINE.
HA. I ENVY YOU.
YOU'RE STILL AT THE START OF YOUR LIFE IN MAGIC.
I'VE BEEN IN IT FOR SO LONG--TOO LONG, PERHAPS.
PERHAPS THAT'S WHY I'VE COME TO NEED THIS LIFE OF NORMALCY AROUND ME. BE CAREFUL, STEPHEN...DON'T LET MAGIC CONSUME YOU.
I OWE YOU...FOR SAVING ME. I OWE YOU.
YOU OWE ME NOTHING.
IT WAS A PLEASURE MEETING YOU, AUGUST WU... YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.
GOODBYE, MR. STRANGE.
YEAH, GOODBYE.

IT WAS SOON AFTER THAT STEPHEN'S HUNT ENDED WHEN HE MET DORMAMMU IN MAGICAL COMBAT--THE FIRST OF MANY SUCH BATTLES.
A TURNING POINT, TO BE SURE--THE MOMENT HE TRULY EARNED THE TITLE, "MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS."
AND AT THE SAME TIME IN HONG KONG, THE AUGUST WU HAD A TURNING POINT OF HER OWN...
...ALTHOUGH NOT AS FAVORABLE.
FOR SHE'D FOUND HER DEMON TOO, OR THAT IS TO SAY...
...IT HAD FOUND HER.

OH!
DAD! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENED! MY HAIR'S THE COLOR OF MUM'S ALL OF A SUDDEN.
DAD...
...WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
NOW.
DETECTIVE GULLIVER?

CAPTAIN?
OH, YOU KNOW ME, OUT AND ABOUT.
IF IT'S NOT TOO MUCH TROUBLE, WOULD YOU MIND TERRIBLY TELLING ME YOUR CURRENT LOCATION?
JOKING ASIDE, ALICE, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU? WE'RE ABOUT TO RAID DOW FAT'S WAREHOUSE... BASED ON INFORMATION YOU UNCOVERED, I MIGHT ADD, SO WHY AREN'T YOU HERE?
BECAUSE IN THE LAST FEW I GOT NEW INFORMATION. SIR.
SOMEONE IN THE DEPARTMENT MUST BE IN HIS POCKET-- FAT'S ALREADY MAKING HIS ESCAPE AND I AIM TO NAB HIM BEFORE HE DOES.
BY YOURSELF?
YOU KNOW HOW I WORK, SIR. BESIDES, YOU KNOW WHAT HE HAS GUARDING HIM.
THE OGRE.
RIGHT. FROM SOME CRAZY PLACE CALLED WEIRDWORLD. HE'S ALREADY PUT COPS IN HOSPITAL ON PRIOR OCCASIONS, SO I THOUGHT, "WHY RISK FURTHER INJURIES?"
SO YOU ALONE CAN TAKE ON A MYTHOLOGICAL MONSTER, NO PROBLEM?
ALICE, DON'T BE SILLY. TELL US WHERE YOU ARE, AND THEN WAIT FOR BACKUP.
NO TIME, SIR.
I CAN SEE FAT'S BOAT.
HE'LL KILL YOU, ALICE.

"NOT IF HE DOESN'T SEE ME COMING."
AND THEN WE HAVE ALICE GULLIVER IN THE HERE AND NOW...
IT'S *HER!*
GULLIVER!
IMPOSSIBLE!
GET HER!
...A HONG KONG POLICE OFFICER, LIKE HER FATHER...
...WHILE SECRETLY--COVERTLY--ALSO FOLLOWING IN HER MOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS.
DO YOU EXPECT AN INVITATION, BRUTE? *KILL HER!*
SHE HIDES HER WITCH'S POWER--IMBUING HER GUNS AND WEAPONRY WITH HEXES AND SPELLS THAT CAN'T BE SEEN BY NORMAL EYES.

RRAAHHHH
HATE TO BE THE ONE TO TELL YOU, MATE...
...YOU'VE WORN OUT YOUR WELCOME!
YEAH, TIME YOU WENT BACK TO YOUR LAND OF ELVES AND PIXIES.
SO, CLEAR OFF!

CAPTAIN? YEAH, IT'S ME.
I'M FINE, DON'T WORRY. OH, I'LL ACHE IN THE MORNING, SURE, BUT OTHERWISE--
I NABBED FAT.
YES, AND HIS PET OGRE.
...JOB'S ONLY HALF DONE OTHERWISE, RIGHT?
I'M *DOW FAT!* I WON'T BE "NABBED"-- NOT BY SOME GIRL--
NOT BY ANYONE!
BLAMM
YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?
THUNK

OH, ONE OTHER WAY ALICE DIFFERS FROM HER MOTHER.
SORRY, CAPTAIN, FAT THOUGHT HE'D HAVE ONE LAST GO AT--
HOLD ON, WHAT'S THIS NOW?
THE TITLE "AUGUST WU OF THE CORAL SHORE" DIED WITH HER MOTHER.
DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE, BUT I CAN TELL YOU'RE *NOT* FRIENDLY--
PREPARE TO BE CLEANSED BY THE EMPIRIKUL!
THESE MODERN TIMES CALL FOR BREVITY SO INSTEAD SHE IS SIMPLY...
--SO LET'S DISPENSE WITH THE NICETIES.
...THE WU!

Witchcraft is broken, and the Scarlet Witch must embark on a globe-trotting journey to fix it!

From Manhattan's back alleys to the Greek Isles to the Irish countryside, Wanda Maximoff faces myths and legends, combats curses and discovers there's more to her complex family history than she knew. But will the powerful mage called the Emerald Warlock be friend or foe? And even as witchcraft is pieced back together, Wanda must discover who shattered it in the first place! The Scarlet Witch will aid brokenhearted hero Le Peregrine and seek help from young witch the Wu, but things won't be easy when she encounters her brother, Pietro! The Witches' Road is long — and full of dangers!

Collecting *Scarlet Witch (2016) #1-15* and material from *Doctor Strange: The Last Days of Magic* — written by James Robinson; and illustrated by Vanesa R. Del Rey, Marco Rudy, Steve Dillon, Chris Visions, Javier Pulido, Marguerite Sauvage, Annie Wu, Tula Lotay, Joëlle Jones, Kei Zama, Leila Del Duca, Annapaola Martello, Jonathan Marks, Shawn Crystal and Mike Perkins.

Scarlet Witch by James Robinson: The Complete Collection https://www.comixology.com/Scarlet-Witch-by-James-Robinson-The-Complete-Collection/digital-comic/892801 Collects Scarlet Witch (2016) #1-15, Doctor Strange: The Last Days of Magic (2016) #1. Witchcraft is broken, and the Scarlet Witch must embark on a globe-trotting journey to fix it! From Manhattan's back alleys to the Greek Isles to the Irish countryside, Wanda Maximoff faces myths and legends, combats curses and discovers there's more to her complex family history than she knew. But will the powerful mage called the Emerald Warlock be friend or foe? And even as witchcraft is pieced back together, Wanda must discover who shattered it in the first place! The Scarlet Witch will aid brokenhearted hero Le Peregrine and seek help from young witch the Wu, but things won't be easy when she encounters her brother, Pietro! The Witches' Road is long — and full of dangers! Scraped metadata from Comixology [CMXDB892801], [ASINB08N2PT5P6], [RELDATE:2021-02-03] Marvel Superhero 318 en XRA-Empire 2021 4 James Robinson Kei Zama Siya Oum